





THE IMPLICATIONS OF  
THE PROBLEM OF EVIL FOR THE CONCEPT OF GOD  
IN THE THOUGHT OF:

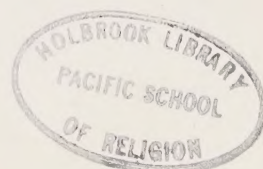
E. S. BRIGHTMAN, NELS F. S. FERRE AND EDWIN LEWIS

by  
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THESIS



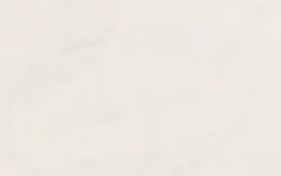
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## CHAPTER I

### THE OVERVIEW

#### A. Statement of the Problem

The title of this thesis, "The Implications of the Problem of Evil for the Concept of God in the Thought of E. S. Brightman, Nels F. S. Ferre' and Edwin Lewis," gives the setting for the entire discussion.

The title is not saying that these men posit the idea that there is a God to explain away the problem of evil; nor, at the other extreme, is it being denied that one can form his idea of God and then base his answer to evil on what he has concluded about God. What is being said is, that as long as one believes in a God who is responsible for this universe, he must formulate that belief in such a manner that it will allow for the existence of evil-- natural and moral evil. The problem of evil has something to say about the idea of God!

The three men that have been chosen to have their positions presented were not chosen because they have said all that is to be said about the problems before us-- the "all" has not yet been said. They were chosen because each one has done some very mature thinking on these problems



and each arrives at a very different conception of God and a very different answer to the problem of evil. All three men belong, in general, to the liberal tradition of Christian thought and yet there is a wide range of possible conclusions presented here. The views range from the idea of a finite God to an infinite God; from a metaphysical monism to a dualism; and from a God who struggles against his own limitations to one who struggles against limitations placed upon him by a force outside himself. It is not necessarily the purpose of this paper to reconcile these views; but it is its purpose to investigate and present each as clearly as possible and to draw those conclusions that seem inevitable from the facts as they are.

Since the study is concerned with "the problem of evil" and "the concept of God," which are ideas abstracted from real experience, this thesis will deal primarily in ideas and concepts--abstractions. However, we face the problem of evil because everyday experiences bring perplexing and defeating problems and we wonder why. In this paper we do not trace each experience through to a logical answer; but, rather, we group these experiences--we look at them in the abstract--and then seek the essence or the source of the total problem of the sum of perplexing and defeating situations.

This is essentially the same thing we do as we encounter the good in life. We experience a multitude of things which indicate that there is rational mind at work





in the ordering of things, that love is at the core of experience and that life has meaning. In our devotional life, we might trace individual experiences of this nature through to their source, but when we seek a rational answer we abstract and look for the essence or the source of rationality, love and purpose.

In working with abstract terms--ideas--, we are participating in an endeavor that is legitimate enough so that we do not need to apologize for it, but an endeavor which requires caution in order that the abstract idea might at all times be relevant to something in actual experience, or, in other words, we might heed the caution of C. D. Burns as quoted by Brightman, "abstraction is logical forgetfulness or the art of forgetting; and it is not misleading unless you forget what you have forgotten."<sup>1</sup> We shall try always to keep in mind what it is that we have forgotten; but we must deal with abstract problems, ideas and concepts.

In the discussion to this point, we have alluded in a general way to several of the limitations placed on this study. Let us at this point be very specific about those limitations and other limitations that have been faced in preparing for this writing.

As has been indicated, we are to deal here with the

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<sup>1</sup>E. S. Brightman, "What Constitutes a Scientific Explanation of Religion," The Journal of Religion, (Vol. 6, 1926), p. 253.





thinking of three men. We shall attempt to keep it limited to those three men. To help in the enforcing of this delimitation, the sources referred to in the work and the sources listed in the Bibliography include only the writings of the three men who are the subjects of this study and the sources of the biographical material. It was felt that the limiting of the sources in this manner would make it possible to represent more accurately the men and yet the basis for the study would be broad enough to guarantee the possibility of a thorough examination of this thought.

It would be presumptuous to think that a thesis of this size would possibly be expected to give a synthesis of the total theological and/or philosophical position of three men who have developed systems of thinking as comprehensive as those of the men here presented. It has been necessary, therefore, to limit the scope to that which is within the realm of possibility and in doing that we shall try to present only as much of the total view of each man as seems necessary as groundwork for presenting the relationship between the problem of evil and the thought about God in their respective positions.

Perhaps the outward and inward limits can best be understood if we pose some questions which will guide the investigation even though the question may not be explicitly asked of each man. The following are some of these questions.

First, we shall be concerned in asking the question, "Does this man believe that evil is a problem?" It might



be supposed that the very inclusion of a man's thought in such a work as this would necessarily mean that he recognized evil as a problem. However, one possible answer might be that evil is not really a problem but that we make it seem to be a problem because we lack faith in God's goodness. The problem may be lack of faith.

Secondly, we may well ask, "If this man accepts evil as a problem, how does he approach the problem?" In other words, we want to know whether these men approach the problem of evil in an objective manner, trying to relate the facts, as they are found, to all the other known facts as experience has revealed them to us. Or do they, or does any one of them, approach the problem of evil with a total world view already thought out and then attempt to bend or divert the problem to fit the accepted position? We want to know at what points these men are objective and at what points, if at all, they are victims of their prejudices.

A third basic question is, "If there is evil, how does it relate to God?" In this question we are asking whether God planned evil, or what we call evil, or whether he has to plan for evil, that is, to meet evil. We are asking whether evil is cooperating with God--a part of his purpose--or competing with God--apart from his purpose.

Proceeding from the third question is a fourth, namely, "Is God consistent in his activity, especially in his activity as a loving creator?" Every Christian ought





to know whether or not he can depend on God's love being infinite and constant.

Finally, we shall want to know, "What does this all have to do with man?" Is there something in the answer to the problem of evil and the relationship between God and evil that has meaning for everyday living? Does it give us a clue to how we might worship God better? Does it tell us any more about what God plans for us to do in this world? Does this answer give us an assurance, or at least a hope, that there will be a victory over evil--a victory in which we can share? This is the question that ultimately establishes whether or not a study such as this is worth the undertaking.

#### B. The Method of Procedure

The method of procedure followed in preparation for the writing of this thesis was a rather simple, though by no means an easy, one. It consisted of taking the more important works of the three men and reading each man's contributions separately, beginning with the earliest writing and following chronologically through to the latest writing. This was coupled with consistent note-taking from beginning to end.

The purpose in doing this was in order that the system of each man might be followed from its earliest expression to its most mature expression. It was not thought that this progression would be demonstrated in this thesis;



but it was felt that the mature expression of thought might be more accurately reflected if the growth process of the various concepts had been faithfully followed. When the reading for the paper was started, about the only questions formulated in the mind of this writer were the questions: "What does each man say about God?" and "What does each say about evil?" But as the reading progressed more specific questions were formulated (these questions will be discussed later under the heading "Possible Values and Contributions") and the reading and note-taking became more specifically directed along the lines necessary for finding answers relevant for this study.

After the reading had been completed, the notes were all correlated according to the subject for which they were relevant and those notes that had no direct bearing on the problem of the thesis were set aside.

When this had been accomplished, an outline of the total thesis was made, using the notes as a basis for the outline. The outline and the notes were then combined to form the basis for a series of four lectures delivered to an adult study group at the Northbrae Community Church in Berkeley, California. This series of lectures indicated the necessity of some revision and further reading. When this had been accomplished, the actual writing and re-writing of the thesis was begun.

The method of presentation in this work will be as





follows:

After this chapter dealing with definition, delimitation, and explanation, will follow three chapters given to the exposition of the three views being studied. Each chapter will begin with a short biographical section, followed by a section explaining what that particular person has to say about the problem being studied and concluding with a section dealing with what seem to be the strengths and weaknesses of that position.

In these chapters, we will deal first with Dr. Brightman. The primary reasons for doing so are, that he was the first of the three men to develop his position in its mature form and, secondly, because it was an interest in knowing more about this position that led to the study of the total problem faced in this theme.

The second of these chapters will be a study of Nels Ferré and his thought. This seems logical, since Ferre represents a system of thinking that, as we shall see later, is an intermediate position, though not necessarily a mediating position, between the other two. This structuring is also chronological because the public statement of Ferre's position, as most maturely expressed in Evil and the Christian Faith<sup>1</sup> precedes by one year the publication of Edwin Lewis'

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<sup>1</sup>Nels F. S. Ferré, Evil and the Christian Faith  
(New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947)



The Creator and the Adversary<sup>1</sup> which contains the most mature statement of his position.

If the structure were based on chronology, alone, it would probably be expected that Lewis would come before Ferre because his publications date back much farther and thus his thought was developing before Ferre began to work out his position. However, we are concerned with the mature thought and hence the logic of where the three thinkers stand in relation to each other.

Having placed the chapter about Lewis as the last in the series of three such chapters, we logically move on to a chapter devoted to the comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of the conclusions of these men, pointing out where they agree and differ and, perhaps, where a synthesis might be achieved where that is possible. The reasons why one position might well be chosen over the others will be discussed.

A final chapter will contain the conclusions of this author about what the study has brought to him and what he thinks such a study has to contribute to others.

In the matter of presentation, there is one deviation from the normal procedure of footnoting which bears explanation. Because there are a number of books by the same authors used as a basis for this study, it was felt

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948)





that footnoting would be simplified if the full reference were given the first time the book was used and each time after that, when reference is made to the same book, the author's name and the initials of the book are cited. Thus, for example, Evil and the Christian Faith, which was referred to on a previous page, will be noted in the following form when used again: "Ferre --ECF, p. \_."

### C. Possible Values and Contributions

What is the justification for going to the trouble of making such a study? Is there something that such a study can contribute that is unique enough and valuable enough so that others might want to read of the results? Is there something such an investigation could contribute that would give enough depth of understanding to the investigator to warrant his studying this problem rather than some other problem?

We have already implied that such an inquiry is justifiable, but let us now investigate some of the possible outcomes of the study in order to indicate why it was made.

First, let us face the fact that it is possible that there might be negative results. That is, we may come to the conclusion that the evil in the world indicates that there is no God or that the God there is is not adequate, and thus lose the security of the faith we have. However, if we were to find that this was the truth, then would we not be better off knowing the terrible truth, than living



blissfully credulous? It seems to this author that there is no justification for any search for truth, unless we are willing to accept all truth where it is found. Beyond this is the fact that, if we challenge the very ground of God's existence and find Him unshaken by our presumptuousness, certainly our faith should be made more secure.

A second possible outcome is contingent on the first. Much is being said, both in theological and psychological circles, about a basic anxiety as a part of the nature of man. Sometimes this fear is attributed to the anxiety that comes from knowing that sooner or later he must die. At other times this anxiety is said to be rooted in each man's basic fear that he is inadequate, inadequate as a social or a sexual being. Perhaps there is no such thing as an anxiety that is part of man's very nature, but whether anxiety is basic to man or not the fact remains that many people do live under constant anxiety. Maybe the basis of this anxiety is a fear that it is God that is not adequate. If God is proven to be adequate to be able to handle the problem of evil, maybe the proclamation of this message can reduce man's most deeply rooted fears. It is worth our investigating to find out.

Thirdly, a study such as this, that is, a study designed to find out more about God, has the value of letting man know more about himself. Very often a minister is asked the "why?" question about existence and especially about the kind of existence that results in suffering and pain





and death. What can the minister say? What can he do, when faced with the agonized parishioner who is asking, "why?" We cannot hope for easily formulated answers; but we can hope for answers. It is true that evil has something to say about God; but a study of evil might show that God has the last word and that that word can be passed on to man.

Fourthly, a more personal study of the nature and character of God should give us a more intimate knowledge of him. Surely, if God is worth knowing at all, the more we know of him the more we will worship him. One of the crying needs of our time is the need to have a more personal and intimate relationship to God. Maybe even an intellectual attempt to understand God might lead us into becoming convinced that God is worth knowing--worth knowing intimately.

Perhaps we will not find any of the answers we seek. Perhaps we will find that we have been searching the unsearchable, seeking that which we cannot find. But even if this proved to be true, this study would be worth the attempt, because we will know that we have wrestled with a question that cannot be ignored. People do suffer. Values are destroyed. Man would rather cease to live, than to give up the quest for the truth as to why he lives and why he lives in the conditions that prevail.



## CHAPTER II

### THE EVIL OF EVIL

#### A. Biographical Statement about Brightman

Edgar S. Brightman is the only one of the three men to be studied that was born here in America. He was born in Holbrook, Massachusetts on the 20th of September, 1884. He died on the 25th of February, 1953.

A very large portion of his life--all of his adult life-- was spent in the field of higher education, both as a student and as a professor. He received his A. B. degree from Brown University in 1906 and his M. A. from the same institution two years later. In 1910 he received his S. T. B. from Boston University and in 1912 his Ph. D. from that University. While working toward his Ph. D., he did graduate work at the universities of Berlin and Marburg in Germany.

His teaching experience started as early as 1906, when for two years he was an assistant in the departments of Greek and Philosophy at Brown University. From 1912 to 1915, he was professor of philosophy and psychology at Nebraska Wesleyan University. From 1915 to 1917 he was associate professor, and from 1917 to 1919, professor of





ethics and religion at Wesleyan University in Connecticut. Since 1919 and until his death, he had been professor of philosophy at the Boston University Graduate School. It was while he held this last position that he had the opportunity to work out his own philosophical position and to present that position to the world in the written and spoken form.

Since his professional position gave him the opportunity to help mould the thinking of Methodist ministers over a period of almost thirty-five years, it is very probable that more people were influenced by his thought, without knowing that they were being so influenced, than were influenced by the direct method of reading his books and articles and listening to his speeches and lectures.

Dr. Brightman was a prominent figure in his field having served as president of the eastern division of the American Philosophical Association (1936); the National Association of Biblical Instructors (1941-43); and the American Theological Society (1933-34).<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Brightman studied under Border Parker Bowne, the founder of the American school or system of thought known as "personal idealism." For years, personal idealism or personalism has been almost synonymous with Boston University and Dr. Brightman and Dr. Albert C. Knudson

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<sup>1</sup> Who's Who in America (Vol. 26, 1950-51), Chicago: The A. N. Marquis Company, 1950. This reference is the basis for the data used in this section.



have been the spiritual leaders. Interestingly enough, it is at the point of answering the problem of evil, that these two great men found their differences in theology irreconcilable. This is another indication of the significance of the problem under study.

## B. A study of Brightman's Thought

### (1) Method of approach

It is rather necessary for us to take a brief look at Brightman's total philosophical outlook, if we are going to be able to see how the problem of evil and the concept of God fit into the scheme of things.

After viewing the resulting philosophy, one is tempted to call Dr. Brightman a "religious empiricist"; but in one sense this is not a wholly accurate evaluation. Dr. Brightman would have felt that he applied the empirical method religiously; but he would have denied that the theistic view he arrived at was more central to his thought than the method that he used. His theistic view is the outcome of his careful evaluation of all the available facts of experience using the principle of coherence as the principal criterion of truth.

This can be put another way by pointing out that Dr. Brightman states that it was in the reading of Hegel that he came to understand and to accept the empirical method that results when one follows out the tenet, "The truth is the whole."<sup>1</sup> Once he had accepted the tenet as

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<sup>1</sup>E. S. Brightman, "From Rationalism to Empiricism," The Christian Century, Vol. 56 (1939), p. 276.





a guiding principle, he must follow that principle where it led. He found that the method of empiricism, properly or faithfully, applied, logically led to the belief in a God that could best be described in terms of personality.

## (2) The Evidence for God

Since Brightman's investigations led him into a theistic view, it seems logical to suppose that the part of his thought we need to know for the basis of this study can be most systematically presented in its briefest form, if we look at the evidence he amasses in his inquiry into the reality of God.

In following out the maxim that the truth is the whole, Brightman attempts to construct a view of God that takes in all the facts of experience, whether that experience was reported as a scientific datum, a philosophical concept, or a religious experience. This method, then, integrates life rather than dividing it up into watertight compartments.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of the implications of science for the view of God are such that Brightman declares that "Science will eventually compel us either to abandon all faith in God or greatly to enlarge our ideas of Him."<sup>2</sup>

Thus science produces data which must be reasoned with if one's view of God is going to be one that attempts

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<sup>1</sup>E. S. Brightman, Introduction to Philosophy (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1925), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



to see the whole nature of God. But science is not to be taken to the neglect of revelation. Not revelation as a final revelation; but revelation that is "regarded as a stimulus to further thought and life, a starting point of motion."<sup>1</sup> If revelation were final or regarded as final, it would leave us with the tendency to discourage any search for truth. But with revelation being regarded as a starting point for further thought and action, we are given a stimulus to move closer to God, and, as Brightman states,

the most devout Christian believer will be as open-minded as the experimental scientists, and far more so than the dogmatic sceptic. He will not only welcome investigation, being aware that fear of investigation is a mark of the guilty rather than the innocent, but he will be among the first to perceive that no understanding of God which we have yet attained can come anywhere near to exhausting the whole truth about the divine nature.<sup>2</sup>

An open-minded look at the evidence produced by science and revelation and viewed through the eye of reason, will yield, primarily, six types of evidence for the belief in God:

First, there is the evidence which comes from the very fact of reason,<sup>3</sup> or the rationality of the universe. All science, philosophy and theology is based on the assumption that investigation in that particular field will fall together into some kind of coherent whole. We have

<sup>1</sup>E. S. Brightman, The Problem of God (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1930), pp. 108-109.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>E. S. Brightman, The Future of Christianity (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1937), p. 100.





"faith" that the universe is reasonable, open to rational inquiry. Scientific investigation would be meaningless, if it were not the plan of the scientist to fit the facts into some kind of coherent whole that tells us something about the world in which we live. All philosophy is dependent on reason to fit together its particular world view. Even the most entrenched sceptic accepts his scepticism because it is the view that gives him the most reasonable explanation for things being as they are.<sup>1</sup>

Reason, rationality, coherence seem to be at the very core of existence; they are basic to understanding life. Just as it takes reason to understand reason; so it takes reason to be able to explain or to account for the existence or origin of reason. Reason is not self-caused; reason is the result of a reasoning being. Any explanation of the universe, as we know it, must, therefore, be adequate enough to explain the fact that this universe exhibits reason and rationality.

The second basic type of evidence pointing toward the existence of God, according to Brightman, is the evidence for the necessity of eternal being.<sup>2</sup> This is a reassertion of the classical argument known as the cosmological argument. It is not an attempt to say that this argument is sufficient evidence to give absolute proof that God really exists; but that the necessity to explain the

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<sup>1</sup>Brightman--POG, pp. 161-162.

<sup>2</sup>Brightman--FOC, p. 100.



fact that there is a world or a universe is one more reason for believing that God is real.<sup>1</sup> The world is a spacio-temporal phenomenon that can best be understood as the result of the creative activity of a being that is both in the space-time relationship yet is beyond this relationship in that this being is not created. The Creator is in time because he is still creating; but he is also beyond time; because there never was a time when he was not. The Creator is sufficient to explain the creation; but the creation is not sufficient to explain either its existence or the existence of the Creator. It (the creation) only demonstrates that the Creator is real.

A third type of evidence supporting a belief in God is the evidence from the fact of conscious personality.<sup>2</sup> This is simply a statement of the fact that the cause of anything must be able to account for the effect; therefore, there must be something within the scheme of things that is sufficient to explain or account for the existence of human personality. It is saying that blind, dumb matter cannot account for rational, conscious personality. In defence of this argument Brightman wrote:

Impersonalists try to dispose of this argument by pointing out that a cause need not resemble its effect. Is it not obvious, they say, that matter undergoes startling changes and that muscle, for instance, bears no resemblance to some of the food which builds it? "Why then," they ask, "should consciousness resemble its cause?" But these persons overlook the law of

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<sup>1</sup>Brightman--POG, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 148. Also Brightman--FOC, p. 100.





continuity which prescribes that there shall be no gaps, no leaps in explanation. However, if we start with a supposed unconscious matter, we can trace no continuity between it and consciousness; we find no atoms or electrons whatever as constituents of our thoughts and feelings; we cannot move from physical space by any power of physics into imaginary space. If we start with matter as the ultimately real, personality is a miracle in the universe. But if what we call matter is itself a manifestation of cosmic personality, as we have suggested, the attempt to explain personality in terms of the impersonal is seen to be as unnecessary as it is impossible to carry out.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth form of evidence listed as pointing toward the reality of the existence of God is the argument based on the emergence of novelties.<sup>2</sup>

Since it is the spirit of Brightman's thought to fit in all the facts of experience into one coherent whole, it is natural that the findings of scientific investigation should play an important role in proving for him that there is a God. The primary scientific fact that has bearing on this study is the fact of evolution. Evolution, however, must be viewed in its proper perspective, i.e., as a fact or theory of science and not as a philosophical concept. Thus the theory of evolution is a description of how the world came to be and not an explanation. Brightman said:

In The Origin of the Species, Charles Darwin, whose views have been misunderstood, said explicitly, "I have nothing to do with the origin of the mental powers, any more than I have with life itself." Thus Darwin admits the point which Bowne and others have urged, namely, that, although evolution is a correct description of the principles of the survival of the fit, it is no explanation of the arrival of the fit.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Brightman--POG, pp. 156-157.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 148. Also Brightman--FOC, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup>Brightman--POG, p. 152.



If the theory of evolution were self-explanatory, it would not necessarily imply that there is a God who is purposefully creating in the universe. However, the upward trail of evolution hints at a purposeful, conscious mind at work; and the fact that there are emergent novelties, that there are stages in the process that are not completely or strictly implied by the previous stage, makes that purposeful, conscious mind a necessary postulate if we are to understand the "why" of evolution.

The fact that evolution is not a steady line upward does not erase the need for a purposeful mind as the source and explanation of the process. This fact only demonstrates that the purpose is being worked out through difficulty, and it demonstrates that God did not complete his work in just a week but rather that "he never ceases producing and sustaining new forms of life which are always related to the old, yet always differ in some respect."<sup>1</sup>

A fifth type of evidence pointing toward the existence of God is the evidence resulting from value experiences.<sup>2</sup> For Brightman, the problem of value becomes the central problem of religion.<sup>3</sup> This is true because life would not go on without values. "If there are no values, there is nothing to exist for. The deepest misery is misery because it frustrates the achievement of desired

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>3</sup>Brightman--ITP, pp. 325-326.





values."<sup>1</sup> Brightman is concerned that we recognize that the avoidance of death and suffering is not based just in fear but partly in the recognition that values worth being conserved may not be conserved in death.<sup>2</sup>

What has been said about value at this point has not been said with the intent of implying that value is only a subjective experience of man by which he is able to read enough meaning into life to make it worth living, for the truth about value is quite different than this idea would suggest. The experience of valuing is subjective and particular; but value is also objective and universal. Value is relative; but value is also absolute.

At first this is seen as an almost impossible affirmation of contradictions; but the antinomy can be reconciled when we see each side in proper perspective. It is true that what one person will value another will scorn. It is also true that value systems vary from culture to culture, so that what is valued highly in one culture may not be valued in another culture. (This relativity of value may be demonstrated by so simple a thing as the difference in the values placed on trinkets in American society as opposed to some native or aboriginal societies or the relativity can be seen in such important matters as the value placed on women in the various cultures.) On the other

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<sup>1</sup>Brightman--POG, pp. 35-36.

<sup>2</sup>E. S. Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1940) p. 42.



hand there are values which ought to be appreciated whether we appreciate them or not. These values do more than satisfy our desires; they give us insight into the nature of reality. Among these objective values are such values as truth, beauty and goodness.

Truth, for instance, is not merely the desired, but it is that which conforms to the ideal of complete logical coherence...Truth satisfies, or ought to satisfy, but truth is not likely to be found if satisfaction is our prime aim. It is to be found only by acknowledging and acting on the laws of truth itself. When we do this we find spiritual and ideal value in truth.<sup>1</sup>

If it be true that there are values that are objective, then it is to be supposed that "true values are experiences of a mind beyond all human individuals and societies."<sup>2</sup> This mind would be the mind of God.

The final source of evidence for the belief in God is religious experience. It might be objected that religious experience is not valid data upon which to base a belief in God because such experience presupposes the God it tries to prove. Religious experience is not very convincing to the non-believer, because

On the one hand, he demands evidence, and loudly asserts that there is no evidence for God. On the other hand, when confronted with the evidence of a satisfying religious experience, he rejects it at once simply because it is satisfying. What satisfies, he tells us, is merely what we desire; and the entire belief in God is only a protection of our desires.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>E. S. Brightman, Religious Values (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1925), p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>Brightman--ITP, p. 163.

<sup>3</sup>Brightman--POG, p. 161.





However, the fact remains that people have experiences that are above the common daily experiences when they really feel the presence of God and are conscious of his sustaining power in their lives. That these experiences are real is evidenced both by the positive effects that have resulted from them and the fact that the experiences are attested by so many ordinary believers.<sup>1</sup> Religious experience, then, must have an objective source.

When taken by itself, not one of the six types of evidence for God is sufficient evidence to prove the existence of God. For that matter, when all the evidence is gathered, there is not absolute proof that God is a reality; but there is enough proof that the most coherent account of the whole of life must include a report of the existence of God.<sup>2</sup> Thus the acceptance of a belief in God is not just a case of wishful thinking; but, rather, the acceptance of a belief in God is the result of fearlessly following the guidance of the best that we know.<sup>3</sup>

### (3) The Nature of God

After applying the principle of coherence to the facts of experience, Brightman arrives at a belief in God which is supported, basically, by the fact that experience as a whole seems to demonstrate conscious purpose at work. Brightman's philosophical position would not be adequately

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 160-161.

<sup>2</sup>Brightman--FOC, p. 106-107.

<sup>3</sup>Brightman--POG, p. 165.



presented, however, if we were willing to stop with the consideration of the fact that God is; for Brightman is vitally concerned with what God is. Therefore, we shall look at what seem to be the rather obvious positive attributes of God. From there we shall look at any possible limitations that might influence the nature of God, with special consideration of the "Given" in the nature of God. This, in turn, will lead directly into a discussion of the resulting view of God.

(a) Positive attributes:

God is conscious personality. We have already spoken of the fact that consciousness in creation implies a creator that is conscious. Blind, dumb, unconscious matter cannot account for the consciousness in the lower forms of life. This being true, it is even more true that matter cannot account for the reasoning consciousness of human personality. God must at least be such that he can be responsible for there being consciousness in his created process.

If there is a God at all, a being worthy of worship, he must be conscious. A blind force might be feared, but could not be adored. To be God is to be conscious. To try to improve on consciousness is to go beyond the evidence of experience and the powers of imagination. If we seek for something which is not consciousness, we find only the unconscious. An unconscious being is not a being more than human; it is far less than human. In this sense, the suprapersonal turns into the subpersonal.<sup>1</sup>

Being conscious, however, does not make God also

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<sup>1</sup>Brightman--PCG, p. 120.





a person; but by speaking of God as person, conscious personality or spiritual personality, we best account for his activity. According to Brightman

When we say that God is a spiritual personality, we mean that he is a pure self-conscious experience, combining the utmost variety and complexity within the unity of one life, and that he is actively engaged in realizing the ideal values of reason, goodness, beauty, and holiness.<sup>1</sup>

The reasons for believing that God is a person are many. The following reasons are given by Brightman as some of the reasons for this belief. When taken individually, none of these are conclusive; but when taken as a whole, they produce a very strong foundation for this belief:

- (1) "Since all of the actual data empirically available are conscious experiences, all that is inferred from those data must be consistent with and explanatory of conscious experience." Even physical forces can be known only as they act on or produce conscious experience; thus consciousness is known to be a fact and can best be accounted for if we suppose that a personal being is responsible for its presence.
- (2) Law and order in the universe imply a personal mind at work.
- (3) "The evidence of history of religion,...of psychology of religion...of sociology of religion... is well explained by the hypothesis that one supreme personal God is at work in all religious experience."
- (4) The evidence for purpose in the universe is evidence

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 116.



for a God who is also a person. (5) The realm of values becomes coherent with the rest of experience when it is explained in terms of personal experience. (6) Personalistic theism is rationally superior to impersonalistic naturalism. (7) The evidence for a belief in a personal God consists of empirical facts which survive all disbelief.<sup>1</sup>

When God is understood to be a person, his personality is thought to be very different, qualitatively, from the personality of man. God is personality, but not human personality. This view of God does not see him as anthropomorphic; but, rather, this view is necessitated because "man is to some extent cosmopomorphic; the same laws are everywhere."<sup>2</sup> If the same laws are not everywhere applicable, then the basis for reason is gone and man has no hope of ever understanding why he is here or how he came to be here.

God is not only a person, but he is also a personal God. That is to say that God is personally interested in us. He is a God whom we can experience, who reveals himself to us, who joys in our joys and grieves in our sorrow. "If God transcended but did not share human suffering, his relation to human experience would be so remote as to be in question."<sup>3</sup> But he does share in our problems and thus we

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<sup>1</sup>Brightman--FOR. These seven reasons are gleaned from pages 227-231.

<sup>2</sup>Brightman--POG, p. 149.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 189.





are made aware of his immanence.

God is also known to be immanent by the fact of his creative acts.

The idea that creation occurred at some one point in time, long ago, is untenable in the light of the expansion of the idea of God. The constant conservation of the energy of the universe points to a will that is eternally creating.<sup>1</sup>

Creation, however, is such that it illustrates not only God's immanence, but also his transcendence. By his power of creation, God transcends anything within his creation. Brightman states that for God to create, means that he brings into being through an act of his will. This is something that human wills cannot do. Human wills can combine factors which they have selected from that which God created; but this is not the same as creating something new.<sup>2</sup>

It is also the nature of God to be eternal. God always was; he is; and he always will be. This was implied when we used the necessity of eternal being as one of the evidences for the belief in God.

It is utterly irrational to think of a time when there was nothing, followed by the beginning of God. It violates all our thought about cause. But it is equally irrational to think of a time when God would vanish. If he ceased to be, then there would be nothing left. The whole universe, which depends on him, would be less than nothing, for it would not even leave a memory.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Brightman--FOC, p. 107.



If we were to conceive of a time when there were nothing and then a time when God came into existence, God would then have to be described as an effect without a cause. This type of conception is beyond the reaches of reason. Likewise, it is unreasonable to conceive of a time when God will cease to be, for this it to postulate a cause without an effect.<sup>1</sup> God is the ultimate source of being; therefore, God is eternal.<sup>2</sup>

God is good and he is loving. These attributes have traditionally been assigned to the nature of God. They are so universally accepted because they accurately describe a basic part of God's character. If God were lacking in either of these attributes, if he were not loving or not good, he would not be God. Without love or without goodness, the eternal would be demonic rather than divine. It would be our duty to oppose him rather than to worship and serve him.

Finally, we should be aware of the fact that God is one and not many. It has been argued that the ultimate source must be more than one; because there is no other way to explain the conflicting forces of nature; the variety of norms actually acknowledged in different societies or the seeming multiplicity of value-producing processes. However, such an assertion as the one just stated overlooks

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Brightman--POG, p. 190.





the evidence proceeding from the unity of natural law, the interaction of all the parts of nature and the fact that, when each value-claim is judged from the whole of value experience, the nature of value experience points to one coherent system.<sup>1</sup>

When it is postulated that God is more than one, what is really being said is that within the unity of God there is real opposition and struggle. "Every person is a unitary experience of diverse and opposing elements; the more excellent the person, the greater the inner diversity and hence the richer the unity that is attained."<sup>2</sup> This fact brings us face to face with the fact that there are some possible limiting factors in the nature of God.

#### (b) Limiting factors

The value which one experiences in knowing God and trusting him and being loved by him, is so far above all other values, so utterly supreme and unique, that religion has found it natural to speak of God as the Almighty, the Omnipotent, the Infinite. Now if these expressions be taken as the language of worship and not of philosophical precision, they are quite understandable and even justifiable. "Almighty" then means supreme over all and mighty for our needs; "omnipotent" means powerful enough to cope with every problem; "infinite" means endless in resource and in future possibilities. But if these ascriptions be taken literally and extended to mean "powerful enough actually to have freely willed and created all the evils of life," a thoughtful mind will hesitate long.<sup>3</sup>

We must be careful not to allow ourselves to become

<sup>1</sup>Brightman--POR, pp. 204-206.

<sup>2</sup>Brightman--POG, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup>E. S. Brightman, The Finding of God (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1931), p. 185.



so enthusiastic in our attempts to show reverence for God that we attribute too much to him and thus deny him. Brightman agrees with Hegel and Bowne that it is possible to have "too much of God."<sup>1</sup>

God must be sufficient explanation for the universe as a whole, then; but he cannot be equated with the universe. This means that the first limitation on God is the limitation brought about by the fact that God must be consistent with himself and he must manifest himself consistently in his universe. He must be rational, coherent and reasonable. These are positive or favorable attributes of God, but they are also limiting factors.

Good and evil cannot be explained away, the problem demands that it be considered. Evil cannot be said to be good. To prove that all evil is really good is to destroy every ground for distinction between good and evil, and thus to eventually undermine logic, ethics and religion. Therefore, we must seek a coherent account both of the evil of evil and the good of good. Ultimately we must accept either the view that God wills what we call evil, and sees that it is good; or we must believe that there is ultimate evil (surd evil) in the universe, evil which God has not approved or willed ideally. God must be consistent within himself and consistent with the universe.

When we say that God must be consistent with his

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<sup>1</sup>Brightman--POG, p. 84.





universe, we mean, in part, that the nature of God's will cannot be such that it will negate his purpose in the universe. Therefore, the fact that God created man, and planned that man should be free to make choices, was a case of God embarking on a great new venture, but at the expense of accepting new limitations upon himself. If man is really free to make choices that direct his life at all, then God is limited to that extent, even though the limitation may be self-imposed. If those choices are really free, then God is limited in his knowledge because he can predict but not know man's future choices.<sup>1</sup>

Man is free to choose that which is destructive of real values. This is moral evil and man is responsible for it; but, even if man is directly responsible for the evil that results through the choices he makes as a free agent, God is responsible for the man who has willed evil. Moral evil implies that God either indirectly wills evil or that there are certain limitations on God that make it possible for him to achieve good only in situations where evil is also a possibility.<sup>2</sup>

Moral evil is not the only type of evil, however, for there are evils which result from acts of nature over which man apparently has no control.

The obstacles which matter and time, suffering and finiteness, offer to the onward movement of spirit cannot be due, as traditional theology has taught, to the sin of man and the curse of Eden. Some of them

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 131-132.

<sup>2</sup>Brightman--FOC, pp. 104-105.



serve a real disciplinary purpose, of course; but man is too insignificant, and the obstacles too vast and cosmic, for them to be explained as wholly due to a deliberate divine purpose to discipline humanity.<sup>1</sup>

Moral evil and natural evil combine to form the most serious obstacle to belief in God that is found in experience. Every good is an argument for God; every evil is an argument against God. However, the arguments for God are so convincing that we must accept evil as a limiting factor of what we say about God but not as a refutation of the belief in God.<sup>2</sup>

Brightman asserts that, even though Hegel would deny it, he (Hegel) developed a very important principle that is involved in understanding the limitations that are placed on the nature of God. This is the principle of the dialectic which simply states that all of reality is full of opposition and contrast

...everything that is stands in contrast with something else; everything implies some sort of antithesis. This means that the nature of God is to contain opposition and tension. But every opposition leads on to a higher level of life; every struggle points to a higher meaning or synthesis. Thus for Hegel, as for our view, the divine life consists essentially of a struggle and victory over opposition, a victory for which a price must always be paid even by God himself.<sup>3</sup>

This process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, which is at the very core of existence and which impresses itself most indelibly on our minds as we meet the tensions that exist between good and evil, leads us into a new view of God in which we see him as a finite God but a God that

<sup>1</sup>Brightman--FOG, p. 117.

<sup>2</sup>Brightman--ITP, pp. 332-333.

<sup>3</sup>Brightman--POG, pp. 135-136.





is far more satisfying to our minds than was the old view of God as infinite.

If we are willing to accept God in this light, we have two very significant things to say about the existence of evil: First, we can say that, though God's will is present and at work in the occurrence of an evil, he did not create that evil. The evil was due to an uncreated "Given" in the very nature of God. Secondly, we can say that the reason God's will is present in evil is that he is there struggling to produce good of that evil. We can say, further, he can cure every evil. Evil is evil and God can never erase that fact; but he can transform and overrule the consequences--he can and he does!<sup>1</sup>

#### (c) The Given

The Given, that Dr. Brightman attributes to the nature of God, is so basic to his (Brightman's) total philosophical view that we cannot talk about his final thought about God without having first discussed more thoroughly the nature of the "Given."

This Given " is the name which describes the total complex of eternal factors in the divine nature which he did not create and with which he always has to deal in the eternal activity of his perfectly good will."<sup>2</sup> This is the briefest definition of the nature of the Given; but this definition can be understood best only after a description

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<sup>1</sup>Brightman--FOG, pp. 91-93.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 174.



of the aspects of the "total complex of eternal factors" has been given. These aspects are such that we can say the Given is conscious, complex, eternal, internal to God, and controlled.<sup>1</sup>

The Given is conscious content, not unconscious matter. If the term "matter" is to be used in connection with the Given, it must not be construed to mean physical stuff but, rather, conscious experience of God. God is a person and as a person he is completely conscious. "As his love is conscious, so also are the eternal conditions under which it labors."<sup>2</sup>

The Given must be understood to be complex in nature, for the Given stands "for the entire uncreated and eternal nature of God."<sup>3</sup> God's nature is complex enough to account for a creation which at times co-operates with his will and which at other times presents a drag on his creative plans.<sup>3</sup>

It naturally follows that the Given is eternal, because it is the uncreated nature of God. If it were created, it would be created in time and would be part of the divine creation. Then, we would be asking why God had created the kind of world in which so much evil is apparent. "There must be something in the nature of God which renders such a creation the best possible; and that

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 175

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.





something, since it must precede all creation, is eternal--the eternal Given."<sup>1</sup> The Given is also eternal in the sense that God will make a progressively better conquest of it throughout eternity without ever completely eliminating it.<sup>2</sup>

The fourth aspect of the Given is that it is internal to God. Our experience makes it very plain that something mars the perfection of the universe,

...something mysterious requires divine patience. Now, it is possible, with many dualists, Professor W. K. Wright being a modern instance, to hold that this something--The Given--is an uncreated matter external to God. It must be uncreated, if God is not to be responsible for all evil. But if God always has to deal with it, if his power neither created it nor can destroy it, then, ...it casts its shadow on his inner life."<sup>3</sup>

When it was suggested that a fifth aspect of the Given is that it is controlled, no implication that God created it is meant. That God controls the Given, his nature, simply means that his nature is subject to his will. There is no aspect of the nature of God that is not ultimately used in the service of ideals. The stalling, the horrible evils--plagues, hurricanes, earthquakes--and other distortions apparent in the processes of the universe are really evil and the fact that they are evil cannot be erased no matter how much good is brought out of them; but the fact remains that God does bring good out of this evil, ultimately. "God is not responsible for evils he did not will; but he is responsible for overcoming the evils and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 175-176.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 176.



helping men to higher levels of goodness."<sup>1</sup>

The nature of the Given, then, explains why God has been moved to activity--his nature is such that his perfectly good will is challenged to activity--and it also makes the slow and painful methods of evolution and the pains and unpredictable misfortunes of human life more understandable. No evil reflection is cast onto the will of God for he is now understood to be perfectly good will working out his purposes through a nature that imposes certain limitations on him. "The so-called 'mistakes' of evolution would be due to its (the Given's) recalcitration."<sup>2</sup>

The danger of drawing too sharply the line between God's will and his nature is very great. The struggle that God has in subjecting and guiding his nature must never be taken to mean that God's nature is evil. A God with a perfectly good will and a perfectly evil nature would be schizophrenic. This type of dissociation was not in Brightman's thinking. In a letter to the Christian Century, Brightman makes this point very clear as he defends his view against an attack that had been made by Professor Henry Nelson Wieman. He wrote:

Hence Professor Wieman is wrong in saying that I regard the nature of God as evil. Reason and ideals are not evil, and not all experiential content of God's is evil. But--and here is a vital issue--I find in God's world signs that in God himself there is a deep and tragic suffering bravely borne. This is what Professor Wieman calls "fiendish horror," what Christianity calls "the Cross," and what I call part of "the Given." Professor Wieman says he cannot love, serve, and adore that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>2</sup>Brightman--POG, pp. 185-186.





horror. Nor do I. I worship no abstract part of God, such as his suffering, or even his goodness. I worship the whole God.<sup>1</sup>

(d) The resulting idea of God

In a sense, we have drawn a portrait of God and then erased sections of that portrait because they did not seem to give an exact likeness. It is now time to finish the portrait in its minute details. It is time to see "the whole God," or as much of him as a portrait makes possible.

It should be noted that what we have called "the positive attributes of God" are real attributes. We were telling the truth about God but not all the truth. Therefore, we can still think of God as creative, supreme, and personal. But we should also recognize that the limitations we attributed to his nature are real limitations and thus God has Given experiences eternally present which modify some of the qualities we would attribute to him.<sup>2</sup> These qualifications do not make him less a God but, rather, make him a worthier God--worthier in the sense that he is more worthy of our worship.<sup>3</sup>

Now, when we speak of the goodness of God, we know that that goodness is an active goodness and a suffering goodness. He creates goodness but there is always a price that even he must pay in achieving good. This points

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<sup>1</sup>E. S. Brightman, "Dr. Brightman's God" (The Christian Century, Vol. 49, 1932), p. 1307.

<sup>2</sup>Brightman--POG, p. 10

<sup>3</sup>Brightman--Fog, pp. 171-172.



toward the fact that God's perfection is a growing perfection. It is growing, not in the sense that he was once evil and is slowly but surely growing in character; but, rather, his perfection is growing in the sense that it is not eternally complete.<sup>1</sup> This idea is summarized very clearly in the following statement:

Divine perfection is, however, not static. For at least four reasons, the perfection of God must be regarded as growing perfection. First, the very nature of personality as conscious activity would point toward the achievement of inexhaustible purposes; there is always more for God to do. Secondly, the problem of the Given would then be divinely dealt with on ever higher levels, as the movement of evolution intimates. Thirdly, the reality of time suggests that an "increasing purpose" runs through time, so that God's work is ever expanding. Finally, the nature of God as Creator suggests that his creative power will never be used up and that he will always devise loftier and nobler cosmic dramas. Thus his perfection is not a present or an unchangeable possession; it consists rather in the endless perfectability of the universe.<sup>2</sup>

Many people are offended by the idea of a developing God; but Brightman thought that such an idea was not nearly as offensive as the idea of a God who had nothing further to do. He said that this universe is either essentially creative or it was not, and that, if the universe is creative, "God is limited by the temporal structure of his experience."<sup>3</sup>

The statement that God is temporal presents another quality in the nature of God which has not yet been fully

<sup>1</sup>Brightman--POG, pp. 130-131.

<sup>2</sup>Brightman--FOG, pp. 182-183.

<sup>3</sup>Brightman--POG, p. 130.





discussed. God is temporal; but to say that he is temporal is not to deny that he is timeless. It is to say that, although God is eternal, he is active in time and his activity in time has an effect on him.<sup>1</sup>

Brightman defends this idea with three very conclusive propositions. They are: First, if God is real, he must have a real relationship to temporal experience. Second, if God were not in time, then time would be adequately described with Hegel's statement, "The night in which all cows are black." Finally, although a good life

"is a life of loyalty to timeless ideas...it is even truer that a good life is a task, a development...A moral purpose eternally and immediately realized with timeless necessity...certainly would stand in no intelligible relation to the actual experiences of moral life among human beings."<sup>2</sup>

The theory that there is a God who is temporal poses three questions: First, "What were the early stages of God?"; second, "What will the future be?"; and third, "How is the divine time-span to be conceived?"<sup>3</sup>

In answer to the first question, Brightman says that we must think of God as having no absolute beginning and thus this question "can only mean to refer to moments of the unending process of the divine life which occurred

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>E. S. Brightman, "A Temporalist's View of God" (The Journal of Religion, Vol. 12, 1932), the three propositions appear on pages 546-548 with the last quotation appearing on page 548.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 553-555.



in a past more remote than man can imagine."<sup>1</sup> This is to say that God always has been, so it is impossible to talk of his beginning; but as a person he has been an active and, therefore, a changing, but unified being. Even if there had to be a time when his activity began, the time would be so far back in the remote past that the human mind could not conceive what that time was like or when it was.

The second question extends into the future the essential answer to the first question. "Neither experience nor thought requires us to suppose that time will ever cease to go on or that significant process will ever end... the divine perfection is God's inexhaustible perfectibility."<sup>2</sup> A time when God's activity will cease is as impossible to conceive as to conceive its beginning.

The third question cannot be answered more clearly or succinctly than Brightman did when he wrote.

Granting that the divine memory would include all past actuality, and the divine anticipation all future possibility, yet the movement of the divine consciousness in dealing with the world of persons would be in a specious present which includes actual choices made by those persons but does not anticipate any of them. Thus God's own experience would participate in the reality of time.<sup>3</sup>

There are a number of possible values in believing in a God who is temporal as well as eternal. Chief among

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 553.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 554.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 555.





these are: (1) God becomes closer to experience and thus means more to man; (2) This belief gives man an incentive for effort, because he is not just waiting for God to act; (3) the thought of eternal and inexhaustible activity eradicates any idea that immortality would be boring; and (4) it seems logical to suppose that, "if the time process since unbegun eternity has not yet destroyed reason and law and goodness, probably it never will."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that there are limitations in the nature of God, especially the limitations force on his nature by the presence of evil in life, is most likely to harm our faith at the point where we have accepted God as conscious purpose. In the face of the fact of evil, is there still room for a belief in purpose? Brightman said there can be room for such belief for the following reasons: (1) much natural evil is a wholesome discipline; (2) moral evil is necessarily a consequence of the wrong use of human freedom; (3) there is much which we call evil because we do not understand God's purposes; (4) if God be understood to be finite, then much of the suffering and delay in the world is made understandable; (5) it is just as reasonable for the philosophical mind to assume that there is a good beyond every evil as it is for the scientific mind to accept the idea that every unexplained fact in the world has a cause and can be explained; and (6) the atheist has no

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



explanation for the fact that there is good in the world.<sup>1</sup>

The God that has been revealed through a study of his limitations can be understood to be a God who is present in human suffering and, in fact, shares that suffering. Human suffering asks for a God who can love. Experience shows that God loves man enough to suffer with him. Human suffering also asks for a God who listens to and answers prayer. Experience reveals a God who is interested in man enough to respond to man's needs as they are laid before him--God joys in man's joy and grieves in man's grief.<sup>2</sup> This is the testimony of religious experience.

Before Brightman was the possibility of answering the problem of evil in at least three ways: First, he could have taken the answer, given by traditional Christian faith, that the element of evil is a result of God's creative will, chosen because it was the best means for the kind of plan he had. Secondly, there was the possibility of explaining evil as a co-eternal force standing in opposition to God. However, Dr. Brightman felt that the facts of experience presented a third, and more sufficient, answer to the problem by supposing that evil is a result of factors within the nature of God.<sup>3</sup> In the long run, Brightman believed, such a God would be more adequate and more nearly

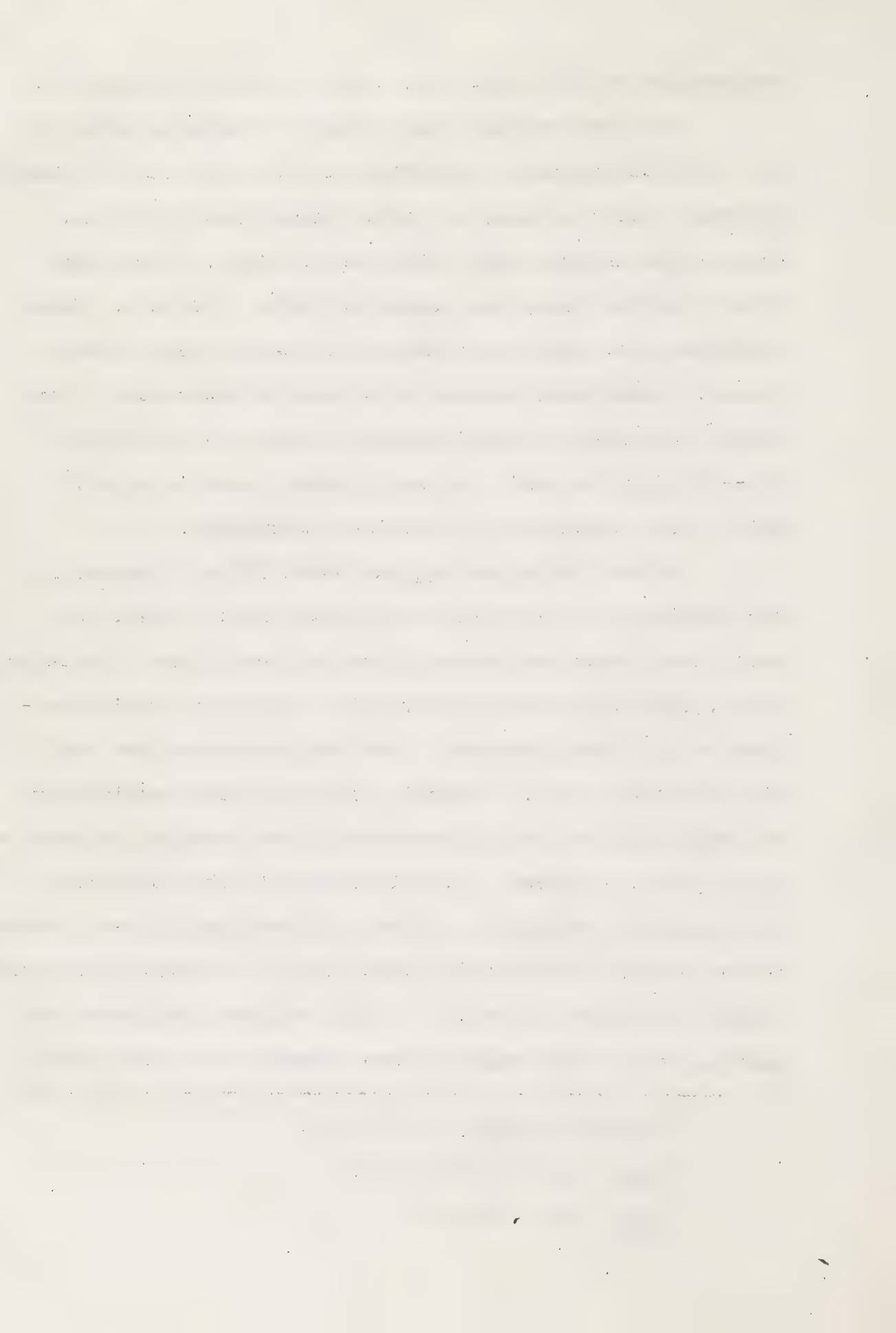
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<sup>1</sup>Brightman--POG, pp. 159-160.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 136-137, 175.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 126-127.





correspond to the facts as they are.

The God whom we have found in our search is a God who is sufficient in power to maintain eternally the process of realizing his increasing purposes. He controls everything that is given to his will so that it contributes to the creative values of the universe. There is something new and unfamiliar in this view of God. It checks the romantic desires of our expansive and emotional moments by a cool consideration of real facts; yet observation shows that steam confined within a boiler is more powerful than steam at large. It is well to have our longings controlled by reality. The restrictions arising from a critical and honest realism should make religious emotion more effective, not less so.<sup>1</sup>

### C. Evaluation of this View

There is much in this philosophical position that recommends itself to us. In relation to the questions posed in the first chapter, we can say that the philosophy is adequate in that it admits that the problem of evil, first, is a real problem--one that can be faced and answered. Evil is not just a result of our lack of faith; but our faith in the universal good can help us face the fact of evil as the problem is faced on progressively higher levels of existence.

Dr. Brightman's approach to the problem is in a realistic and a comprehensive manner. There is no attempt to explain away any type of experience and an honest effort is made to take into account every experience, regardless of the problem that a given experience may present.

Thirdly, his view is a result of his attempt to relate evil to God in a meaningful and true relationship. The way in which this is done reveals a God who is consistent

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<sup>1</sup>Brightman--FOG, pp. 191-192.



in his activity as a loving creator. We find the love of God and his creative power are such that we can consistently depend on him.

According to this view, the investigation makes it clear that man has a friend who shares man's load. It assures man that God is adequate to any situation and that good will constantly be brought out of the evil man has to face. Each apparent victory of evil is only a temporary drag on an eternal purpose, a purpose which includes a creative immortality for man as part of the means in achieving good.

Not all that we have to say for this view can be placed on the credit side of the ledger. There are still vital areas where basic questions are not fully answered or the answers are not fully understood. It may be that we will never be satisfied; but the following objections are serious enough that we would be held at fault if we did not at least present them for consideration.

Probably one of the most difficult objections to handle, both in making clear what the objection is and in answering the objection, is the criticism that arises out of the very nature of the type of study it is. We are suggesting that matters became abstracted to the point that we forgot what it was we had forgotten. Dr. Brightman leads us through a philosophical investigation which began with the data of everyday experiences, moved on to a discussion of teleological and dysteleological factors in the universe





and finally rested the discussion in the source of all value and disvalue, the will and the nature of God.

It is easy to fall into the trap of taking the parallelism of the previous sentence too literally, because so much has been abstracted. It is almost normal for us to want to equate the value-creating purpose with the will of God and then to equate the value-destroying factor with the nature of God. The fact that Brightman clearly states that the nature of God is such that both value and disvalue arise from it, notwithstanding, it is difficult to conceptualize this in terms other than a dualism in the being of God. Somehow the abstraction does not fit the data from which it is abstracted.

The resemblance to a dualism is made more pronounced by the fact that Brightman consistently capitalizes the term "Given." The Given is equated with the nature of God and yet a proper name is given to it as though it were an entity apart from God. Of course, this is done for emphasis, but the fact may be that it is necessitated by the very nature of things.

Another difficulty, with which the resulting view must wrestle, is how the charge of pantheism is going to be denied. Brightman reacted very quickly to any attempt to label him a pantheist. He argued that to make God everything was to make him nothing. If God is all that is, he is both good and bad will. But if evil is placed within the nature of God, how have matters been helped? What is



there other than God?

The charge of pantheism becomes even more of a real problem to this position when it is remembered that Brightman espouses personal idealism and thus his metaphysics is an idealistic monism. All experience, all matter, is basically mental. The universe is not divided up into mind and matter; because what we call material is ultimately seen to be mental in nature.<sup>1</sup> But the question becomes, "whose mentality?" and "whose mind?" If the struggle seen in the evolution of nature is understood to be God's infinitely good will at work on the recalcitrant in his nature, then nature, itself, must be a part of God and the mental nature of matter would support this view.

The position set forth in this chapter has a great deal of appeal for the author of this thesis. The method of trying to understand God in terms of what we can understand; in terms of what we can reason from what we see, hear, touch and taste in sense experience; and in terms of our religious experience--in short the method of understanding God through a coherent interpretation of all of experience--is appealing to the mind because it promises us that in a sense God's ways are not beyond our ways and we can know his general nature.

It falls short, however, in making the line between the nature of man and the nature of God too straight. There is so little possibility of disjunction in this view that

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<sup>1</sup>E. S. Brightman, *A Philosophy of Ideals* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1928), pp. 5, 10, 89.





despite Brightman's statement to the contrary the total view smacks of rationalism. Mechanism is denied on the basis that it doesn't account for the emergence of novelties in evolution. Yet, Brightman accounts for revelation in very rationalistic terms. He needs to give more room for the emergence of the new in ideals to correspond to the emergence of the new in matter. There is much more to revelation than is described by the term "new insight" and Brightman does not allow enough room for that something more.



### CHAPTER III

#### LEARNING FROM EVIL

##### A. Biographical Statement about Ferre

Nels F. S. Ferre, the second personality to be studied in this thesis, has played a role of importance in the fields of philosophy and theology that is quite phenomenal for a man so young. Few men receive recognition in an entire life that is equal to that which he has received since the publication of Faith and Reason in 1946.<sup>1</sup>

Ferre was born in Sweden in 1908 and came to America at the age of thirteen. In this country he pursued his education, receiving the A. B. degree from Boston University in 1931. He went on to Andover-Newton Theological Seminary and there received his Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1934. Also in that year, he was ordained into the Congregational ministry. Ferre did further graduate work at Harvard and received the M. A. degree there in 1936 and the Ph. D. degree in 1938.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nels F. S. Ferre, Faith and Reason (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946).

<sup>2</sup>Who's Who in America (Chicago: A. N. Marquis Company, Vol. 27, 1952).





While working on the Ph. D. degree, Ferre spent a year studying in Sweden, which resulted in a considerable maturing of his own thought.<sup>1</sup>

He began his teaching career as an instructor of philosophy at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary in 1937. In 1939 he was advanced to the Abbot chair of Christian theology at that school, a position which he held until 1950. In 1950 he accepted the chair of philosophy and theology at the School of Religion, Vanderbilt University. He has continued in this post to the present time.<sup>2</sup>

His eminence in the field of theology is attested by the statements of outstanding men in the field of religion--men who do not necessarily agree with all that Ferre has said but who respect the depth of the thinking. Among those who have words of praise for Ferre are

<sup>1</sup>Nels F. S. Ferre, "Beyond Liberalism and Neo-Orthodoxy" (The Christian Century, Vol. 66, 1949), p. 362. This article was written on the general theme of how his thought had changed in the previous ten years. In this article (p. 362) he gave the following thumb-nail sketch of his theological growth,

I was brought up in a fervently fundamentalist home and received an almost entirely liberal education. This background made urgent the reconciling of the warmth of an evangelical heart with the demands of an informed mind...In reaction to the intellectual inadequacy of fundamentalism I had become a typical liberal. My first intimation that such a thin diet was not necessary in order to be honest had already come to me while I was a student under Whitehead. A subsequent year in Sweden with Aulen and Nygren sharpened my doubts as to the adequacy of the liberal method; even so, I had to hold onto it until I could see beyond it.

<sup>2</sup>Who's Who in America, Vol. 27, op. cit.



John C. Bennett, who has said that Ferre is "one of the most original and religiously sensitive among American theologians," and Henry P. Van Dusen, who said that Ferre is "one of the most promising younger leaders of Christian thought in the United States."<sup>1</sup>

The deep interest that Ferre shows for the problem of evil can partially be traced to the fact that he has had to bear a great deal of physical suffering.<sup>2</sup> In this sense his theory has passed the pragmatic test and the testing of religious experience of being able to sustain the faith of someone who is actually suffering.

#### B. A Study of Ferre's Thought

This position differs enough from that presented in the previous chapter, that we cannot follow exactly the same outline that was used there. We shall begin, as the previous equivalent section did, with a discussion of the general approach accepted by Ferre and from there we shall go on to discuss his views on God, man, nature and evil. Then we shall make a general summary of the whole position before we move into the section that deals with evaluation and criticism.

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<sup>1</sup>The Christian Century (Vol. 66, 1949), p. 354. This paragraph is based on the biographical statement which accompanied Ferre's article, "Beyond Liberalism and Neo-Orthodoxy" (op. cit.).

<sup>2</sup>Ferre, "Beyond Liberalism and Neo-Orthodoxy," op. cit. In this article Ferre looks to the future rather optimistically feeling that he was in better health than he had known before. In a letter to the author of this thesis in 1952, Ferre mentioned having to undergo further operations on his feet; but the general tenor of the letter was optimistic.





In general, the temptation to compare Ferre with Brightman will be resisted and the comparisons will be saved for the fifth chapter; but there will be points at which the attempt to make the thesis as clear and concise as possible will warrant that comparisons be made.

### (1) Method of Approach

Ferre approaches the matter of building a theological system with the belief that what we conclude about the universe in which we live must be based on all the known facts. But all facts must be taken in their proper perspective. Facts are part of a process "what was, is ever becoming what will be, via what is."<sup>1</sup> Facts do not remain the same and facts in one area do not necessarily dictate the facts in another area. It is important, according to this view, to keep the facts straight, i.e., to define the areas of jurisdiction for the three disciplines: science, philosophy and religion.

#### (a) The circle of science

Science has a definite field of activity in which it reigns supreme; but the field is limited to the extent that a circle can be drawn around the field of activity that is legitimate for science. When science is applied anywhere outside of that circle, it is a false application, and modern man has tended to use science, falsely.<sup>2</sup> Science

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<sup>1</sup>Ferre--ECF, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ferre--FAR, p. 40.



can be a "catalytic agent" in the fields of philosophy and religion and thus science can cause important changes in these fields; but science, philosophy and religion are not synonymous terms. To equate any two of them is to play false with both of them.

In our time, there is a great tendency toward extending the circumference of the circle of science; therefore, if we take note of some of the abuses that have been made in the application of science, we can see the limitations that true science must have. The following are part of a list of such abuses as given by Ferre':<sup>1</sup>

(1) There has been the tendency to apply the scientific principle of tentativeness to the areas of philosophy and religion. Science is skeptical of conclusions until full proof is available. This is a commendable trait when applied to a field where this is possible; but this principle is not always applicable when the quest is for knowledge about values and ideals.<sup>2</sup>

(2) Science has too often been used to prescribe rather than to describe. We have not been satisfied to let reason and religious experience speak in the areas where they are legitimate because they were regarded as not scientific enough for us. Science can be helpful in revealing religious truths, but religion does not need science to bolster it.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ferre--FAR, pp. 55-94 list and elaborate on these abuses.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 61-62.





(3) Science in its strict sense has been glorified because its method is objective; but its objectivity has its limitations, too. Pure objectivity has little to say about the subject that is investigating the object. The most vital areas of life are in the realm of the subjective. Motivation, freedom, value claims and the ultimate are aspects of life that cannot be fully understood in objective terms. Thus strict science has tended to handicap philosophy and religion and even the social sciences by setting up as ultimate the false ideal of pure objectivity.<sup>1</sup>

(4) The spirit of the scientific method has permeated our whole thinking to the point that we tend to take the analytical and critical attitude into every aspect of life. There are those areas of life where greater value is achieved by approaching matters with appreciation of the creative.<sup>2</sup>

It has been necessary to approach the circle of science from an analytical and critical manner to show that there are outer limits to the circle. Within the circle there is much that is positive and creative. Science is a legitimate field of study. Strict science is the source of our knowledge of the natural laws by which the universe operates and the social sciences tell us much about the way that man operates; but when it comes to answering the "why" questions about the universe and about man, we must go beyond the limits of science.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 65-79, 94.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 90.



## (b) The circle of philosophy

"The field of science is the logico-empirical, or that of mathematically measured sense-data, whereas philosophy deals with the whole field of human knowledge."<sup>1</sup>

It is the nature of philosophy to take the entire field of human knowledge for its scope of study and to deal with that field primarily to interpret it.<sup>2</sup>

In fulfilling its function, philosophy has set three main standards of inclusiveness, coherence and objectivity. The inclusiveness of philosophy is that it is concerned with the whole of experience. The coherence of philosophy is its attempt to give a

coherent interpretation of the totality of our temporal experience. Its basis is the present stage of process. Its content of coherence is the here and now. Philosophy is the coherence of the actual. From the here and now philosophy can view the past and future. It can predict certain possibilities and even probabilities in the light of past developments and present tendencies. But what is yet not actual is only possible, or at most probable, from the perspective of rational knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

The objectivity of philosophy can best be demonstrated in contrast to the subjectivity of theology. Philosophy must treat religious knowledge, or the content of religious knowledge, as a part of knowledge as a whole. It must "wrestle for its very life with the questions of discontinuity and must ever seek to weave what is partially

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 122.





discontinuous into fuller relations and meanings."<sup>1</sup>

Theology views religious knowledge as the essential knowledge and as personal knowledge, personal in the sense that it can be possessed or, rather, one can be possessed by it even when one cannot fully comprehend the truth inherent in religious knowledge. Philosophy is a very necessary check on theology; but rational knowledge can never be substituted for faith.<sup>2</sup>

The circumference of the circle of philosophy, then, must encircle the whole world of rational knowledge, interpreting all the facts and meanings of our actual world; but, like science, it must adhere to its proper task if it is to be useful in informing and enriching us. "Foolish or arrogant philosophy...confuses knowledge with truth, its distorted and partial appearance with Reality."<sup>3</sup>

(c) The circle of religion

Ferré's purpose in speaking of the circles of science, philosophy and religion is to point up the fact that he believes the scope of science and the scope of philosophy can be encircled and that, though the scope of religion cannot be encircled, the fact that religion cannot be encircled helps to show its relationship to the others.

The field of science was shown to be that of the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 127-130.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 143.



logico-empirical; the field of philosophy was seen to be the whole field of human experience as it centers in the here and now; the field of religion is "the whole of experience centering in the complete combination, obviously only partially here and now, of the most important and the most real."<sup>1</sup> Theology is the interpretation of religion.

Some of the similarities and differences between theology and philosophy are: (1) Theology is oriented to salvation, therefore, while epistemology is basic to philosophy. The concern religion has for epistemology is to find out how it effects salvation and conduct.<sup>2</sup>

(2) Theology is interested in logic because it is the source of right thinking; but philosophy is interested in logic purely for the sake of logic.<sup>3</sup> (3) Ontologically, both theology and philosophy seek "to discover what the real truth of our experience is and indicates."<sup>4</sup> This interest differs, however, at the level of function, for at this point "philosophy is speculative or interpretative while theology is through and through existential, that is, completely concerned as unavoidable whole-response with the question of man's nature and destiny in relation to what is most important and most real."<sup>5</sup>

With the areas and functions of the three disciplines, science, philosophy and theology, it can be seen

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 113.





that theology is dependent on science and philosophy for knowledge, but theology goes beyond both science and philosophy because of its particular application of the means of faith.

Faith as Ferré defines it is "no jump in the dark over an unknown river but rather an adventurous leap across from actuality to the land of the ideal by the means of unfinished theoretical scaffolding.<sup>1</sup> This faith opens a new expanse for the exploration of man which makes man's religion characteristically different from his philosophy or his science. Ferré lists five such characteristics of religion: (1) Selective ideal--religious truth is to be understood in terms of the highest instance of the good within actuality.<sup>2</sup> (2) Selective actuality--whereas the selective ideal implies a religious interest that points beyond the whole of actual experience to something better than the aggregate, selective actuality affirms that no theory as theory can solve our problems.<sup>3</sup> (3) Existential ultimate--religion holds that the ultimate is as existential as we are and more important. By "ultimate" religion means the most important and the most real.<sup>4</sup> (4) Reflexive superspective--this is to say that it is characteristic of religion to look at the world from the perspective of the most high and to seek in the long run for the world to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 149.



conform to the perspective.<sup>1</sup> (5) Dynamic self-verification  
 --By this term, Ferré means that religious truth is always held to be progressively self-verifying and that, conversely, the opposite of religious truth must always be progressively self-refuting.<sup>2</sup>

Having approached the field of total human experience from the point of view of defining the areas of jurisdiction and the nature of science, philosophy and religion, it becomes apparent, now, that the problem of evil and the nature of God are the primary concerns of religion and can be best understood or most fully explained by theological inquiry.

We turn, now, to Ferré's theology for a study of those parts of the total field of theology which have the greatest bearing on the problem under study; the doctrine of God, man, nature and the fact of evil.

## (2) The doctrine of God

In several respects, Ferré tries to distinguish this view of God from the view of traditional Christianity and the new interpretations of many contemporary thinkers because those views have been misleading. The first point at which Ferré attacks the predominant Christian thinking is at its tendency to think of God as abstract being. He writes, "The God of the Christian faith throughout an extensive part of the Christian tradition has been obscured because abstract being, or being as such, has been a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 152.





dominant working concept."<sup>1</sup> He continues by rejecting this concept, and the concept of God as becoming, because neither does justice to the doctrine of creation or "to the fact of the genuinely new in nature and history."<sup>2</sup>

Such a primary philosopher as Edgar Brightman, furthermore, with his clear and powerful analysis, seems to picture God not only halfway through eternity with His creative abundance, but actually to be conquering His irrational given by means of process, in which case we have becoming as real within eternity in the form of an actually growing God. Our problem in Brightman's case is his lack of a real doctrine of the infinite in the first place, and, if God can thus grow from deficiency into perfection, He should have done so long before now within infinite time. Brightman's conception is too closely tied down to a finite cosmic epoch and is not sufficiently anchored in the metaphysical analysis of ultimate being as such. The solution of our finite problem of evil, therefore, is raised into ultimate status by making it the solution of the problem of God. Our task is not to solve the problems of the infinite, but to reach the correct understanding of it, in the light of which we can in turn grasp and cope with our finite problems. Yet Brightman is at least one thinker who has done much for the restating of the whole problem of whether there is potentiality in God, whether God as well as the world can become.<sup>3</sup>

He objects, also, to the tendency to regard God as a person or by the opposite which describe God in impersonal terms. For him, both personalism and impersonalism detract from the fulness of the Christian faith. Therefore, Ferre attempts to construct a view of God that is at once honest to the facts of experience, as we believe them to be, and the Christian faith, as we perceive it to be. This

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<sup>1</sup>Nels F. S. Ferré, The Christian Understanding of God (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 26



view is an attempt to shed light, especially on "the general relation of being to becoming; love as being; love as becoming; love as personality; and love as spirit."<sup>1</sup>

As indicated, a basic matter in understanding God is understanding the relation of time and eternity and the understanding of God's process in time throughout eternity. Time is created in eternity. It is created and it is time. Time cannot be eternal in itself but it is eternally created by God. This is by way of saying that God, alone, is eternal being--eternal but not timeless, since he eternally creates time. Thus "not only is time an aspect of His being-becoming...but is a part always of His creative activity."<sup>2</sup>

The basic continuity and discontinuity between time and eternity is demonstrated, again, by saying that time and eternity cannot be treated as corresponding spaces; eternity cannot be treated spatially. "Transcendence and immanence cannot mean qualitatively the same thing; God inhabits eternity; man, time."<sup>3</sup> But God creates time and he creates in time.

What God creates, furthermore, is not illusion, maya, but the reproductions of His own life and fellowship, and the conditions for its coming to be. He creates and generates sons; eternally He causes fellowship to become and to remain.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>3</sup>Ferre--ECF, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup>Ferre--CUG, p. 74.





To talk about time, then, is to talk about God's creation. God creates, rules and sustains and redeems all that is other than himself. "God and his realm must be carefully kept apart--in nature--and also carefully kept together--in his care and control--according to the demands of our existential ultimate."<sup>1</sup> The creation, over which God rules, and which he sustains and redeems, is not an inherent part of the nature of God. He does not create out of necessity. Rather, creation is the result of "love's overflowing joy and strength."<sup>2</sup>

This last sentence is a key to understanding more about God. Time, or a study of time, indicated that God is eternal, that he is eternally creative and, now, that he is creative because he is infinite love. To say that God is infinite or eternal has meaning only when we understand that God is also love. For it is only as we understand love to be eternal that we can see that "what is inconsistent with the eternal structure as such, can be... consistent with its creative nature or with its pedagogical purpose in time; for love allows the freedom which produces the inconsistencies within its pedagogical period."<sup>3</sup>

The nature of infinite love is such that we can see that God is not limited by his own structure. Infinite love exceeds in potentiality any and all actualities.

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<sup>1</sup>Ferre--ECF, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>3</sup>Ferre--CUG, p. 22.



It works in a free, selective and creative manner making possible new creative relations or responses.<sup>1</sup>

Infinite love is inexhaustible without exhausting the realm of non-being. Love grows infinitely by its creations without exhausting its possibilities. Love as ultimate being is not thought of serially, as the adding of one or more creations to an infinite number. It is, rather, always to be thought of as indivisibly infinite being, defining reality as self-existing and self-directing.<sup>2</sup>

Another aspect of God's love is that it is "self-conscious love." Ferre' uses the term "self-conscious love" to represent the fact that God is conscious of himself, or fully aware of his nature which is to have a focus outside of himself. God's love is not self-love or selfish love, but it is a consciously outgoing love, a creative and redemptive love--Agape.<sup>3</sup>

The God that is being progressively revealed through the study of time and eternity, becoming and being, is often described by Ferre' with the phrase, "the most high is the most real." He writes:

All the hosts of confirmatory reasons for believing in Christianity are...of but secondary, though vital importance. The standard of faith, however, is its highest revelation, a transcendent God of love who is both the Most High and the Most Real.<sup>4</sup>

For Ferre', the strength of such a view is that it is the only conception of God that is adequate to handle

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 109-110.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>4</sup>Nels F. S. Ferre', Return to Christianity (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943), p. 12.





the problems that arise in our present process. If we try to explain or describe God only in relation to the process as we now experience it, we will find God inadequate to handle the problems before us. If, however, God corresponds to our highest ideal, the end of the process is before us and we can see victory in it. "Our problem is already prospectively solved. We have a reflexive superspective in the light and power of which we can work...Then we can face the future with faith and vigor."<sup>1</sup>

The question naturally arises, if the end of the process is known, "Is the deterministic claim true?" Ferre asserts that it is true that we or that the process is determined, "if by that is meant the ultimate control of the good."<sup>2</sup> In this sense God even conditions and controls man's freedom. Our freedom is only the freedom of our finite nature. It is freedom within limits. God has set controls by which man is guided but not forced in his choices.

The next question that is raised, when God is said to be the Most High and the Most Real, concerns foreknowledge. It has been indicated that God knows the ultimate outcome of good and that to this extent he conditions and controls man's freedom; but how about specific choices in the present and in the future? Does God know every moment

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<sup>1</sup>Ferre--FAR, pp. 209-210.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



of future experience as he knows every moment of present experience?

In answer to these questions, Ferre answers that God knows all future possibilities and thus he can foretell the future to a greater degree than we could ever imagine; but God cannot know the future as present experience. If the future were present experience, it would not be the future.<sup>1</sup>

These three aspects of the future, God knows perfectly--mathematical or mechanical prediction, closed networks of decision, and the nature of all finite results in general--but even God never knows them as actual or present; He knows them as future in the sense in which they are present within the actual, i.e. in the category of the irreal. As irreal they point toward the future and go beyond the present, certifying, however, even as they do, that they are not now actual.<sup>2</sup>

Knowing God to be the Most High and the Most Real, reveals to us that God is also Trinity. God is one, not three; yet God is not fully described until he is described in terms of the Father, as self-contained consciousness, the Son, as creative consciousness and the Spirit, as relational consciousness. The concept of the Trinity is not a point to which we are led by our reason; but, rather, it is a starting point from which all time and all space proceed. "This is the Divine Greenwich, which we cannot know or control."<sup>3</sup> The Son enters every created time and

<sup>1</sup>Ferre--CUG, pp. 92-94.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 94. Ferre is using the term "irreal" to point up the fact that the future is not yet real experience; it is only a real possibility.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 79.





the Spirit relates all times within the total plan of God. "By means of the Son and the Spirit, God thus experiences in His wholeness conditional as well as constant contents of time. The majesty and the mystery of that reality lies beyond our faintest and fullest dreams."<sup>1</sup>

In the previous chapter, we spoke of God in personal terms and, in this chapter, we have at times spoken of God as person and at times spoken of him in non-personal terms. The question now arises as to whether or not God is person. For Ferre, the term "personality" is applicable to God only as one of four analytical components of his love. In other words, God is love or, rather, the Most High and the Most Real is Love. Love is expressed in more than just the terms of personality. It includes being, becoming, personality and spirit.<sup>2</sup> "Personality, therefore, is not the ultimate category of identity, but love as Spirit, a being-in-becoming with a personal purpose."<sup>3</sup> Even the use of the four categories does not fully describe God--that is one reason he is understood to be Trinity. However, it is not wrong to say that God is person; it is only wrong to say that God is fully described in terms of personality.

The implication of attributing personality to God is, first, that, as personality, God is purposeful or a purposing being. Purpose is not a means to personality;

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 45-46, 79.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 50.



"Purpose is part and parcel of personal self-being."<sup>1</sup> Secondly, to say that God is person, as well as spirit, being and becoming, is to say that there is the mental aspect of God. The fact that God is self-conscious, self-transcendent and self-directing stress the mental aspects of God.<sup>2</sup> But the mental aspect of God also is in relation to a physical aspect, a third implication of the term "personality." God has a mind-body relationship within his personality. "If God's becoming is as eternal as his being, there is no time when he was not creating. There was not time when God was pure spirit having only infinite nonbeing to complement him."<sup>3</sup>

Nature is God's external means of communicating with us. Thus, we may say, that God has body "in so far that nature both receives the impressions from what we do in our body and in so far as nature must be adjusted... into a pedagogical process, partially independent of God through which man can learn to know God and his will indirectly."<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that a shovel full of dirt is a shovel full of God, either directly or indirectly; it means, only, that all creation is in some way related to God. God creates in a manner that certain realms are other than God while other realms provide the "impersonal medium and material both to manifest the work of God and to make

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid..

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 36.





possible our responsible manipulation of external forces."<sup>1</sup> This distinction keeps us from falsely believing a pantheistic description of God, for it now becomes apparent that while all things are contained within God's body, not all things are the body of God.<sup>2</sup>

That God is person, means, also, that in a very real sense God has a subconscious. Past experiences are past as experience. All that is present of past experience is present experience. This does not mean that God forgets what has taken place. It means that not all past experience is immediately conscious in God's present experience. "All things are subject to God's immediate recall, but not all things are present in His consciousness."<sup>3</sup>

To have God described, even respectfully, in such anthropomorphic terms, suggests that we might re-open the question concerning God's infinity. If God is present in creation in a mind-body relationship that even includes a subconscious, does not this mean that God has limitations? Isn't it possible that our God is a growing God?

Ferre' says that God is not limited either by self-limitations or by external conditions. What we might call logical limitations, or limitations imposed by the laws of logic, are not real limitations. To say that God is limited by logic, is only to describe the complete faithfulness with which God adheres to "the created laws which He

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 36.



has designed for whatever cosmic epoch."<sup>1</sup>

God is not limited by the fact of human freedom, either. Ferré's reasoning on this matter is that we must consider, first, that the end desired is a real fellowship, and thus we should realize that

Means are not ends, the fact that freedom be used and abused because it is freedom, in short, the fact that there be history, is not an external reality to limit God, but the total context of the meaning of love and fellowship, which define both the best that we know and the nature of the most real.<sup>2</sup>

To argue that God is limited on the basis that he is as he is and could not be otherwise, is to misunderstand the meaning of description. For instance, to point out that man is faithless but God is faithful and then to assert from this that God would not be God if he were otherwise--this maneuver does not prove a limitation on God but only illustrates that God has, in part, been accurately described. The stability of his structure and the changelessness of his love are descriptions of his perfection and not of any limitation. The terms "limitation" or "logical limitation" or even the term "self-limitation" are not applicable to God, then, for they speak of God in terms of power rather than Agape.

God's sovereignty in Agape is not curtailed but expressed in the creation of this kind of world as a means. His limitation of power in order to allow human freedom is in reality His free and humble sharing of His power for our sake, and thus not a limitation of Himself but His gracious giving of Himself according to His infinite will.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ferre--BCF, p. 71.





But in the process of creation, of becoming, is not God growing? Ferre gives a yes and no answer to this. He says that it is not necessary to think that God has had to grow merely because he has performed an exterior act. "After all, cannot God grow flowers without growing himself?"<sup>1</sup> The fact remains, though, that when God creates, he creates something new and there is an increase in his realm by material creation. The significant increase is not in the material realm, however. The significant increase comes in the fact that there is a constant increase in his reign by the constant increase in his family, by "the eternal increase within His affective relations."<sup>2</sup> Thus time is ever adding to God's infinitely rich life.

When we speak of the increase of God's reign by the increase of his relationships in a family fellowship, we imply that God has a personal involvement in the relationships of his created sons.<sup>3</sup> How, then, are we going to reconcile God's absolute glory with his personal involvement in man's suffering? To answer fully this question, we should know more about the nature of man; but an

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<sup>1</sup>Ferre--CUG, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>3</sup>Ferre uses the distinction "created sons" to refer to all human beings, for whom God must suffer because of their rebellion, and he uses the term "redeemed sons" for those persons who have, in faith, accepted the redemption of the cross and thereby become "new beings" in Christ. By virtue of being "new beings" the "redeemed sons" are no longer a point of suffering for God, but, rather, are a part of God's redeeming work acting on the rest of created society.



analogy can be given that will tentatively answer the question:

A mother's dismay at hearing the infant cry at her taking away something the infant has seized and should not have, might suggest something. The mother is sorry for the infant only because the infant does not know any better. God knows and cares about his infant's troubles, but His purposes and joy are so steadfast and beyond doubt...that His sympathy does not detract from his intrinsic glory and overflowing well-being.<sup>1</sup>

Yet God does suffer in history as Son, though not as Father, demonstrating the truth that the Cross is the highest, the deepest and the best means to the highest conceivable end.<sup>2</sup>

The final view of God, then, is a view that God is eternal and absolute. He is the Most High and the Most Real on whom there can be set no boundaries. It is proper to speak of God as "He" or "Him" only if it is recognized that personality, thus attributed, does not fully describe him. He is best described as infinite love, Agape, with the primary aspects of being, becoming, personality, and spirit. In other words, he is love that eternally is and becomes personal spirit. His eternal purpose includes a family fellowship with redeemed sons. Thus, though he is absolute, he is not untouched by the human situation.

It is in the light of the doctrine of God, that other doctrines become meaningful.

### (3) The nature of Man

It is necessary for us to have at least a brief

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<sup>1</sup>Ferre--ECF, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 75.





look at the nature of man, if we are going to understand the nature of moral evil. We shall want to know how responsible man is and to what degree God might be responsible for the evil man does, if, indeed, God could be responsible for any evil.

Man is in the image of God. But man is only a created image of God. God created us and shared his nature with us; but he did not make us the same as he is. "God is God and man is man."<sup>1</sup> Yet, in order that we might be truly free and truly different from God, "we have been given a will to live which contains a will to independence."<sup>2</sup>

We are not so free that our purpose or our passivity ultimately rests in God for only his purposes can be self-originating and self-sustaining. Our freedom is consistent with our nature and with the nature of the purpose God has in mind for us. "God wants us to be free, to be ourselves. He wants us to be individuals, to be different, to be new representations. God is creative. He wants us to share His never ceasing creative fullness."<sup>3</sup> This is truly freedom within law, even though God is love and not law.

As high as is the concept that man has free will, man is not fully described in terms of will or of freedom. Man is also body and spirit.

No living soul...is ever born before God breathes His spirit into his nostrils. We are of the earth, earth; but more importantly of the spirit, spirit. Being

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Ferre--ECF, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



is love, and no personal being becomes apart from the actual impartation of love. God is ever a part of His personal creation. In creation of children God makes bodies, but gives His spirit.<sup>1</sup>

By giving man freedom, God placed a responsibility before man. The more freedom man enjoys the more responsibility he has. Ours is a cosmic responsibility and a social responsibility; we are responsible to God and to man. The choice of co-operating with cosmic purpose, and with social purposes, is always before us and we are held liable for our choices. This is the very situation that gives meaning to evil. The time comes when each person, if individuality is to have meaning, must make his own choice, even to the point of judging God and rebelling against him. From the first page to the last page we have read, the story of man is filled with instances where man has rebelled against God. This rebellion is sin. Man cannot escape it and still be man and he can overcome it only when he has asserted his freedom enough to freely accept God's wish that man should live harmoniously in the eternal fellowship.--That is the paradox: that man only becomes really man when he chooses to be free and he is truly free only when he freely submits his will to God's, having faith that God's will is the best possible will.<sup>2</sup>

If God made us so that sin was inevitable for us, does this not make God ultimately responsible for our sin?

<sup>1</sup>Ferre'--CUG, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Ferre'--ECF, pp. 33-48.





This is another yes and no situation. The answer is no, if we are asking, "Does God want rebellion?" God never wills that man rebel for God always wills the best for all. But the yes answer comes when we admit that God

not only allowed us a neutral freedom weighted towards the self, toward estrangement, toward maturing, self-judgment, toward an independence that would make our freedom authentic. Besides He put us in a precarious environment. Even the garden of Eden story represents man's fall as due to three conditions not man's own choosing: a forbidden tree, a desire for the fruit, and an external tempter to seduce man...Unless God proposed this kind of world, including man's rebellion, the Cross of Christ becomes accidental as a full principle of explanation, devotion, purpose, and power.<sup>1</sup>

#### (4) An explanation of nature

Natural evil, which presented the data for the core of the problem in the last chapter, is not considered such a problem by Ferré. However, it is recognized as a real problem and the basis for finding a solution to the problem is found in the way nature is conceived to be.

The most amazing fact about nature is the suddenness with which man appears on the scene when the whole sweep of time is considered. "A cosmic second ago there was no animal life. A fraction of a cosmic second ago there was no human life. A fraction of that ago there was no recorded history."<sup>2</sup> The progress has been so fast that one wonders if too much is not being made over the delays in the process. The problem of natural evil, however, is a real problem and perhaps our most difficult one.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 65.



Nature is a necessary medium "whereby God can lead man generally without forcing him specifically."<sup>1</sup> That is to say that if it were not for nature man would deal directly with God and would have either to obey him directly (determinism) or to rebel directly against his will (freedom so strong that the rebellion could be permanent).<sup>2</sup>

Nature is stable enough that we can plan our future in part; but it is precarious enough that we have to make our plans tentatively.

It is good that we can create, can invent. It is also good that the use of our creations and our inventions is precarious. We are not made to live in perfect security and satisfaction. With us all power is precarious...Instability in nature, in any case, including sudden death or slow death, death by natural catastrophe or by gradual decaying, is God's heavy hand on our will to self-sufficiency.<sup>3</sup>

This insecurity brought by the fact that we can plan but not know, is a definite means toward bringing about fellowship. Man learns that he must co-operate with other men and with the purpose of God if his life is going to have the greatest degree of stability possible.

We do not know about the effect of natural catastrophe on the lower forms of life. We do know that before it is a catastrophe it has to effect conscious experience. Catastrophe is meaningless to inanimate objects. We know also that God is far more sensitive to consciousness than we are and that he has a means for dealing with pain that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 57.





we do not even know about. There is the affirmation that "not even a sparrow falleth without His knowing and participating in it."<sup>1</sup>

(5) The problem of evil

At every level of discussion, nature, man and God, the problem of evil rears its head and though we have dealt with it in part at each level, no systematic presentation of the problem has been made. Whatever explanation is given for the problem of evil, it must be consistent with the principle that the Most High is the Most Real. In other words, we approach the problem of evil with the view that the answer to the problem must be deduced from the nature of God.

The first step in solving the problem of evil is to see it in its proper perspective. The tendency to define evil from the hedonistic perspective, magnifies the problem beyond all proportion. If pleasure is the supreme good, then this world is evil to the extent that there is even the slightest pain or suffering. If, however, our perspective is that of viewing the world in light of the establishing of a fellowship based on love, we see how inadequate the hedonistic principle is.<sup>2</sup>

No partial perspective will net us the whole truth about evil. Neither will we have the whole truth on the level of "explanatory perspectives." On the explanatory

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-3, 21.



level, evil is accounted for in the sense that freedom and the continuing disciplining of our experience give meaning to all suffering. It is on the existential level, from the point of "existential perspectives," that purposeless suffering and evil has meaning. "Every time we inflict harm carelessly or intentionally and every time that we fail to help the good, to relieve suffering, to break oppression, to dispel ignorance, we are guilty of adding to the world needless suffering."<sup>1</sup>

Purposeless suffering, naturally, is evil. But we can never be sure just exactly what purposeless suffering is. We are able to comprehend so little of the long sweep of God's history, that we do well if we are able to see the general direction of his purpose. When we try to read the specifics, we find that it is beyond our comprehension. "We cannot, therefore, point to animal pain, to an idiot, or to the death of a wicked person as examples of purposeless suffering."<sup>2</sup> We just do not know.

Most of what we would call evil is so labeled because of the level of our perspective. If we broaden our perspectives, however, new facts appear to guide us toward a more wholesome view of life. By viewing the total sweep of the history of evolution, or as much of evolution as we can see, it is apparent that past creative changes persist as present. It is true that perversions also persist;

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 126.





"but with corrective change, perversion perishes."<sup>1</sup> We see, too, that the pleasure-pain principle in nature works in such a manner that much that we call evil is merely instructive. "Evil is the barbs on the fences as we climb away from the good which God in His mercy has prepared for us."<sup>2</sup> The analogy is carried further by pointing out that the farther we go from the good God has for us the longer the barbs become.

It becomes evident, then, that that which is really evil is not the evil of nature but the evil resulting from the nature of man. "Natural evil... is just the precariousness of nature for our sake that we might have the right kind of pedagogical environment."<sup>3</sup>

Evil is basically due to the necessity of our rebellion, at least in temptation, that we might be free; our estrangement that we might understand; our hate and hiding that we might love. How good and patient God is! For our sake he lets us revolt. Evil is also due to the consequences that must follow our rebellion in order to show us that God's way is the best.<sup>4</sup>

The suffering we experience, then, is part of God's perfect purpose for us that we might have a rich fellowship. It is that part of the purpose that leads us to despair so that we might take a critical look at our individualism and thus reject individualism for the fuller fellowship.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>Nels F. S. Ferré, Christianity and Society (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 18.

<sup>4</sup>Ferré--ECF, p. 36.



"Suffering leads to empathy and should lead to sympathy; although it may harden lives, on the surface, there is a crying understanding within which...is the preparation in the fulness of each man's life...whereby the self ceases to be a dot and becomes a cell."<sup>1</sup>

#### (6) Conclusion

The conclusion of the study of evil in the thought of Ferré is that the basic reason that evil presents such a problem, or the basic reason man considers evil such a problem, is that man in his finite perspective finds it difficult to reconcile his time with God's eternity. Man is so involved in the particulars, that he fails to see the universals.<sup>2</sup>

From the standpoint of the universal, evil loses its significance as evil and becomes significant as an end. This does not mean that God uses evil means to produce good, God does not sin. It simply means that the means are good. Evil means can only produce evil. Therefore, when God uses what we thought to be evil to produce good, it demonstrates the fact that our perspective is too low.

The implication of Ferré's conclusion, has far-reaching effect in the theological answer to the soteriological problem. Ferré states that the problem of evil ultimately forces us to accept a finite God, and thus

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<sup>1</sup>Ferré--FAR, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup>Ferré--ECF, p. 82





have faith in a God that is not adequate explanation for the universe, or we must accept a God who in infinite time wins a complete victory, that is, wins all souls to him in fellowship. The choice is between a finite God and universal salvation.<sup>1</sup>

This does not mean that there is no suffering or that there is no hell. For God carries a cross in his heart and man suffers the pangs of hell through the insurmountable barrier between heaven and the heart. However, hell can be erased and in God's good patience hell will be erased. Part of the cross is God's patient waiting for man to become willing to accept the invitation to heaven.

### C. Evaluation

At many points, Ferré's thinking and his language become so clear and so enlightening that it is like a direct revelation; but part of his legacy from Whitehead is his ability to abstract and to form new words. Whereas Brightman begins with personal experience and works up to abstract theory, Ferré often begins with the abstract and develops its meaning to personal experience. The disadvantage of this method is that he often keeps the reader

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<sup>1</sup>Nels F. S. Ferré, The Christian Fellowship (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940), pp. 95-96. Having already eliminated the concept of a limited or growing God, Ferré accepts the belief in universal salvation. This is primarily an eschatological problem, however, and is beyond the scope of this paper. God's foreknowledge of the end result does have implications for man's freedom, and thus bears on our problem, but this will be discussed more fully later.



swimming in the dark until the light is finally turned on; the advantage in the method is that regardless of how abstract his thinking becomes, Ferre tries always to give the abstraction a concrete meaning. In a sense, with Ferre abstraction does not lead to forgetting what you have forgotten, but, rather, remembering what you never knew.

As indicated in the early part of the chapter, Ferre derives his interest in evil, and to some extent his answer to the problem, from personal suffering. One cannot deny that personal experience must affirm our ultimate conclusions or they are not valid; however, suffering, no matter how bravely endured in personal experience, can be endured through the application of the proper drugs. The difficulty of using drugs to relieve pain, however, are two: (1) some people react violently to the drug and thus it causes more suffering rather than less; (2) when the drug wears off the pain returns, sometimes with an even greater intensity. The point is that Ferre's description, or prescription, does not in every case fit the facts of experience and thus he tends to deaden the pain rather than to eradicate its source.

Ferre seems to take the whole problem of natural evil too lightly. There is much more to evil than moral evil. Actually the problem does not lie primarily in the moral realm. Man is not the chief cause of evil. The vast majority of the evils that bring about the facing of a problem are in the natural realm. The uncontrolled flash





floods, earthquakes, hurricanes and all the terrible, deadly diseases were not of man's origin but come out of nature. The evil they do, seems to outweigh the good that comes from them.

Perhaps the suffering of a brave soul as he dies the slow and painful death of an eating cancer will arouse our sympathy and place us in a new relationship to that person--but what a price it has cost.

When Ferré speaks of man's freedom, he speaks in weasel words. He gives man freedom with one hand and takes it away with the other. He says that man is free to choose; but that God knows all the possible choices and that he knows in general what the outcome of the choice will be. God lets man choose as he will but within the limits that man will ultimately choose to join the fellowship. If Ferré's view of the future includes universal salvation for man, his present choices are free only in that they can speed or delay the final choice each man will make. It seems to this author that Ferré's view of freedom offers man a freedom that is an illusion.

Ferré never really demonstrates a purpose for man. Man is created in time; works out his salvation with faith; and then could possibly become a closed chapter in the book of God's life. All the while God exists in a trine relationship which was perfectly adequate before man came on the scene and will be perfectly adequate after man leaves the scene. God would be the same whether or not he created man.



To speak of God suffering in history as Son but not as Father, tends to split up the core of God's existence. How can the Son suffer in history without the Father suffering also, if God is one rather than many?

Another concept, which leads to trouble in this view, is the idea of God having a body. This term is very anthropomorphic and very misleading. Ferre does not say that all the world is God; but Ferre does say that nature is God's body, the medium and material by which he guides man and responds to him. Ferre thus protects himself from the charge either of being anthropomorphic or of being pantheistic while at the same time, giving the impression that he is both.

Another point at which Ferre is not very specific, is when he speaks of the account at the garden of Eden. Here he mentions an outside tempter, which was responsible, in part, for man's sinful decision. Granting that Ferre uses this story as an analogy, the fact remains that he does say the situation is analogous and specifically mentions the tempter which is outside man. He never discloses the nature of this tempter but, rather, at this point leaves the impression that it is conscious. According to the total view, the tempter would have to be a creation of God and man becomes a plaything by which God tempts him to do wrong and then punishes him so he will learn to do right.

The strength of the position, however, is best seen





in its religious value. God viewed as the Most High and the Most Real certainly has a majesty that compels our respect, awe and reverence.

The view rightly points out that we cannot have the wisdom of God. We cannot know all there is to know; but we can know that whatever happens can be fitted (Ferre says is fitted) into the total plan that works toward a real victory in God. God's adequacy is such that it will take care of our inadequacy.

This view also demonstrates that man is bound together into one total plan. God made us to want individuality but he made us to seek fellowship. It is within the fellowship of those who are in Christ that we truly begin to respond to the plan and purpose God has for us.

Finally, man does not suffer alone; but Christ on the Cross suffers with us. Our burden is God's burden, and God not only bears our burden but he comforts us through his spirit. Man means something to God; man can feel that he belongs.



## CHAPTER IV

### GOOD VERSUS EVIL

#### A. Biographical Statement about Lewis

Edwin Lewis was born in Newbury, England on the 18th of April, 1831. As a young man, he was a student at Mt. Allison University in Canada, Middlebury College in Vermont, and the United Free Church College in Glasglow, Scotland. He came to America to become a resident in 1904 and was ordained into the Methodist Episcopal Church in that same year. He was pastor at Velva, North Dakota, for the year 1904-1905 and from there went to Drew Theological Seminary in Madison, New Jersey. He received the Bachelor of Divinity degree from Drew in 1908 and served pastorates in Chatham, New York and Rensselaer, New York. During the school year of 1915-1916, he not only served the last mentioned church but also completed his work for the A. B. degree and taught English at the New York State College for teachers at Albany, New York.

1916 proved to be a significant year for Edwin Lewis in several ways. He not only finished the A. B. degree mentioned above, but he also became an American citizen and entered a new full-time profession. Starting in 1916 and running through 1918, he was instructor in





Greek and theology at Drew Theological Seminary; from 1918 to 1920 he was adjutant professor of systematic theology at that school; and since 1920 and until his retirement in 1951 he had been professor of systematic theology there.<sup>1</sup>

Despite his thirty-five years as a member of the faculty at Drew, Edwin Lewis is not as well known, generally, as either of the two men studied so far and much that is said about him is not wholly accurate.<sup>2</sup>

A chronological study of Lewis' thought has more of significance to contribute to understanding the progression of thought for the man than the same type of study contributes in understanding either Brightman or Ferre. There is much more of change from his early thought to his mature thought than was ever demonstrated in Brightman's thinking and more than seems likely to take place in Ferre's thought.

In 1924 the publication of his first book, Jesus Christ and the Human Quest,<sup>3</sup> because of the liberalism of

<sup>1</sup>Who's Who in America, Vol. 26, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup>In book reviews, such as the review of his book The Biblical Faith and Christian Freedom (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), appearing in the "RBC Bulletin" (Religious Book Club, Vol. 26 No. 7), speak of Lewis as once being Neo-Orthodox, implying that he was once in the school of thought associated with Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. Lewis called and calls his position "Biblical Realism" and, in his article "From Philosophy to Revelation" (The Christian Century, Vol. 56, 1939), stoutly maintains that he arrived at it quite independently of Barth.

<sup>3</sup>Jesus Christ and the Human Quest (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1924).



of thought expressed in it, raised such a storm of protest in the Methodist Church that his continuance at Drew was carefully considered. He weathered the storm and in 1926 was assigned to co-author a one-volume Bible commentary.

His closer association with the scriptures resulted in a new respect for revelation. Thus when his book A Christian Manifesto<sup>1</sup> was published, more liberal ministers accused him of slipping back into fundamentalism, others accused him of turning Neo-Orthodox.

His final, and most radical, change came with the publication of The Creator and the Adversary<sup>2</sup> in 1948. In this publication, Edwin Lewis espoused an entirely new (to him) metaphysical position. He rejected the metaphysical monism that had been basic to his thinking to that point for a metaphysical dualism in which good and evil are due to two opposing forces which are both ultimate realities.<sup>3</sup>

This resulting view is radically different from his earliest theological position but it is not without lines of continuity which will be pointed up in the next section. The point of bringing the development in at this stage was to show that it is through great mental strain that Edwin Lewis ultimately answers the problem of evil very

<sup>1</sup>Edwin Lewis, A Christian Manifesto (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1934).

<sup>2</sup>Lewis--CAA.

<sup>3</sup>This resume is based in his article, "From Philosophy to Revelation," op.cit., p. 762.





differently than do most contemporary thinkers.

## B. A Study of Lewis' Thought

### (1) Method of Approach

As we indicated in the previous chapter, Lewis' early position was one of liberalism. It was based considerably on the thinking of Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison and through him to Kant, Hegel and Lotze. The resulting view was a close affinity to Pringle-Pattison's "higher naturalism."<sup>1</sup> When Lewis decided that this position was lacking in depth, he did not completely reject the scientific and rational basis for the position. He did not reject the method as method, but, rather, ceased to accept it as a method for a total theology.

Science and philosophy are fairly adequate for the purpose of describing and explaining the world as far as man can describe it with his innate capacities. But the empirical method is inadequate for the total explanation of the basic "why" questions. Why the universe is as it is; why man is here; why man has to struggle; why there is creativity and discreativity--these are all questions that take something more than man's science and reason to explain them.

To the degree that man ever gets these questions answered, the answers are given him by God. Reason and science are helpful as far as they go, but ultimately

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis--"From Philosophy to Revelation," op. cit.  
p. 762.



they receive verification and explanation through the greater revelation of God.<sup>1</sup>

If there is nowhere a "given", no absolute by which to check our desires and purposes, no Reality from which we can move into experience, but only experience from which we build up a hypothesis, then we can never escape the fear that the universe is not finally on our side...

All this uncertainty vanishes on one condition. It is the condition that the ultimate truth of things and so the ultimate meaning of things shall have come to us directly from the ultimate source of things. God Himself must speak, and we must know what he said.<sup>2</sup>

The source of revelation, then, is God and the source of our knowledge of the revelation is the Bible. Lewis views the Bible as the Word of God which has been given through the words of men and developed over a long period of time and through a slow refining process,

...but at last, in Christ "made flesh." The Creator appeared as the Redeemer. He who acted in the primal miracle of creation acted again in the miracle of redemption. I saw that this must either be true or not true. If it be not true, then we have nothing but the confusions of naturalism. But if it be true--and it must be true if we are to have enduring hope--it can be true only as something revealed, not as something discovered.<sup>3</sup>

Man does not discover God. God then, is not discovered by man, but, rather, he discloses himself to man.

<sup>1</sup>Lewis--CAA, p. 7; and "From Philosophy to Revelation", op. cit., p. 762.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin Lewis, "Revelation and Its Alternative," Religion in Life (Vol. 11, 1942), p. 176.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis, "From Philosophy to Revelation," op. cit., p. 763.





The fact that God discloses himself to man in the way he does (through the long slow process of self-disclosure and by the redemptive act in the incarnation) is evidence that God is carrying out his will through conditions that are in opposition to that will.<sup>1</sup> This makes the problem of opposition, the problem of evil, the central Christian problem.

At the risk of giving our conclusions first, we must look at this central question, briefly, because an early facing of this problem results in the disclosure of the principles essential in tracing the action of evil both in its temporal and its eternal aspects.

The problem of evil comes into our thinking early because every one who gives life any careful thought sees that in life which he is not able to call good. He sees the same forces that work toward good, also working toward evil. He sees forces that seem to be working together for good opposed by forces that seem to be working against good or purpose.<sup>2</sup> Without a nervous system we could never know pleasure, but the nervous system is also the basis of our pain. "Why must the same arrangement carry both possibilities? Why must the machinery of good be also the machinery of evil?"<sup>3</sup> These are not rhetorical questions.

<sup>1</sup>Lewis--CAA, pp. 89-90, 127.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin Lewis, The Practice of the Christian Life (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1942), p. 93.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 95.



These are real questions that arise out of the experiences man has, experiences that hurt. These are the questions about the very meaning of things, even the meaning of destiny. "When men meet something which denies something they believe ought to be, or destroys that which they love... the fact arouses in them very much more than a mere speculative curiosity."<sup>1</sup>

Lewis prefers to think of this evil in more than the usual two categories of moral and natural evil. Moral evil is opposition to God's will and includes both sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit; natural evil includes all of the destructiveness that comes from wild outbursts of nature. But these categories do not cover all the perplexing and painful experiences of man.

There is, however, a form of evil which it seems difficult to classify. Again and again we see that things take a turn which nobody wanted, which nobody deliberately planned, and which nobody anticipated. Enterprises motivated by a sincere desire to promote human good become instead the widespread woe. The very order of the world, and the very structure of human society, seem not to be uniformly directed toward the triumph of good. They may just as well issue in devastation as in blessing.<sup>2</sup>

The nature of this third category of evil is even more a problem to man's thinking because it implies that whatever there is in the way of obstruction in the universe, that obstruction must be conscious. Brightman saw this to be true and therefore, explained it as the conscious Given,

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis--CAA, pp. 18-19.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis--PCL, pp. 94-95.





a part of God's nature. But Lewis sees this effort as needlessly placing an irrational aspect in the nature of God in order to hold on to the presupposition that this world must be explained in the light of metaphysical monism. Lewis sees this irrational consciousness, the Given,

...to be real enough, but...to be set over against God's nature instead of being included in it. What this does to the usual "monistic" view of things is clear enough, but it is yet to be shown that there is anything sacrosanct about a metaphysical monism just because it is monistic.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of evil can best be seen, according to this view, to be answered by recognizing that the irrationalities in the universe, the organized evil, is due to a force that is in opposition to God and similar to God only in the respect that this demonic force is also eternal.

This becomes more clear and more convincing as we examine the factors that enter this eternal conflict.

## (2) The Contestants

The contestants in this great conflict on the eternal level are two: The Creator and The Adversary. If we understand the nature of each of the participants, we may better understand the whole position and be in a better position to judge it.

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis--CAA, p. 20. While it is true that Lewis does not actually assert his metaphysical dualism until 1948 with the publication of the book just cited, he had recognized as early as 1940 that, though men tend to be theoretically monistic, they think and speak in dualistic terms. See Edwin Lewis, A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), p. 295.



## (a) The Creator

Our knowledge of God comes from his revelation of himself to us. Without that revelation, we could never be certain that he is or even remotely certain of what he is. On the other hand, man is a rational creature and this rationality is necessary for the comprehension of the revelation. Thus the view of God we affirm will come from revelation but it will not be experience-denying or call for personality compartmentalization. The revelation of God goes beyond reason but does not deny it, and the description of God given here attempts to correspond to what both reason and revelation say that God is like.

As the section heading hints, God must be thought of, primarily, as a creator, or at least this is a basic aspect of his nature. This creativity is not just an incidental aspect of his nature but a necessary part of his nature.

"God is therefore creative by his necessary nature. He is not a being who may create, but a being who must create. The necessarily existent who is necessarily creative necessarily creates."<sup>1</sup>

Although God creates out of necessity, (Lewis does not say why God is under necessity to create) he is still the sovereign creator. "God may choose what to create."<sup>2</sup> He determines the character of his creation. "This is his

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis--CAA, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 165.





Sovereignty. Sovereignty is not arbitrariness. The creative will is the will of God, and God has his own nature, and it is good. Mere creativity could be terrifying, but not the creativity of sovereign goodness."<sup>1</sup>

The question naturally arises as to what sense God can really be sovereign goodness if he is under a creative necessity and if his creation is not completely good. Lewis answers this by saying that God has sovereignty in that he has an infinite number of possible creations from which to choose, but out of these possible creations he, and he alone, chooses which creations he will make. His choice of creation is based in his motivation of holy love which means that, out of the possible creations, God chooses the best possible of the choices.<sup>2</sup> God's sovereignty is not absolute sovereignty, however. "He cannot choose to create without reference to the uncreative and the discreative. He must secure free spirits against all the force of demonic subtlety."<sup>3</sup>

If creation comes at such a price, if God has to become personally involved in maintaining the creation, why does he do it? Two partial answers have been suggested, namely, that God is under necessity to create and that he is motivated to create the best possible of all creations.

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin Lewis, "The Question Concerning God," Theology Today (Vol. I, 1944-45), p. 447.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis--CAA, pp. 160-161.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 165.



Other partial answers are:

...third, because through all the conflict of the creative with the discreative, holy love was seeking the means of its own increase; fourth, because this increase was possible only as there were free spirits capable of coming to holy love; fifth, because this was the only way in which such free spirits could be secured. What Science calls evolutionary method was the strategy of creative holy love, but the strategy of creative holy love grew out of the necessities of the case.<sup>1</sup>

God's personal involvement in his creation is such that it is also his nature to be a suffering God, a savior. The darker the circumstances in the world, the more that situation calls for God. Man is incapable of handling even the moral evil for which he is responsible; he is even less able to consider single-handedly conquering natural evil of the cosmic, demonic force. God necessarily serves his creation as savior, but not only as savior also as suffering savior. This is the meaning of the cross and this explains how good is brought out of seemingly totally evil situations.<sup>2</sup>

(God)...may be a partner in enterprises that he profoundly disapproves or even hates. This requires that we think of his purpose as involving him in suffering, and of his universe as wearing for him a certain tragic aspect. The conception of a suffering God is admittedly difficult, but it throws light on facts which are otherwise utterly dark. For by his serving and his suffering God purposes to save. His greatness is proved not by his remoteness from our human life but by his very nearness to it. He works in all and for all because he would save all.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis--ACM, pp. 126-127, 148-149; and Edwin Lewis, A New Heaven and a New Earth (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941), p. 99.

<sup>3</sup>Edwin Lewis, God and Ourselves (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1931), p. 138.





If God's relationship to evil were that of using it to discipline free willing spirits in preparation for the richer fellowship, it would seem that some persons are over-disciplined, while others do not receive enough discipling.<sup>1</sup> It would seem more likely God is suffering with those who suffer and at some places he has to meet a greater force for evil than he meets at other points.

The fact that God is personally involved in his creation might lead some to think that he is not sure that he will eternally be in control of the situation. Lewis does not feel that we need fear God's inadequacy at this point. He is convinced that God does not fear the future. He writes,

God possesses in Himself resources to assure that what he has begun he can complete. Creation is not just a rash adventure. Even if we call it an "adventure," it is an adventure postulated on the inward adequacies of the Creator...for God the future is always a real future for which he must wait, even as we must wait, it is a future that God does not fear because he has faith in his power to meet it. We are called upon to have faith in the God who has faith in himself. He has faith in his utter adequacy to any situation which time and the Adversary can bring about.<sup>2</sup>

#### (b) The Adversary

The rational necessity of believing that there is an adversary, an opponent with which God has to compete, lies in the fact that the whole problem of evil is not explained merely in terms of human freedom and the resulting sin. That there is freedom and that there is sin are

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin Lewis, "The Creative Conflict," an address delivered before the Layman's League of Christ Episcopal Church, Martinsville, Virginia, November 10, 1950.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis--CAA, pp. 170-171.



not questioned but there is a source of evil outside of man that turns man's best intentions awry and defeats the good he would do.<sup>1</sup> This evil cannot be attributed to God, if we believe him to be good. Our minds demand a rational answer and one such possible answer comes in supposing that there is a power for evil the same as there is a power for good.

The revelation of the fact that there is an evil power in opposition to God would seem to be pretty explicit in the Bible. The idea of the serpent in the creation story of Genesis is that God created the world to be good but there was another power, the serpent, the demonic, which was at work corrupting the creative work. The nature of this demonic is the opposite of that of God and different from man--neither divine nor human.<sup>2</sup>

Lewis feels that there is much evidence to indicate that Jesus, too, was aware of activity and real presence of a mysterious and evil power which was continually disturbing human relationships and disrupting human plans. He does not mean by this that we have to accept all that the New Testament places in the mouth of Jesus as really being what he said; on the other hand, Lewis feels that we cannot discard everything Jesus had to say about the apocalyptic and the eschatological merely because it is apocalyptic and eschatological.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis--PCL, pp. 96-96.





Jesus continually assumes, even asserts, a dualism.

He sees

the world as the seat of a conflict. A battle is proceeding, and it is a battle to the death.

Doubtless in much of his expression Jesus is dramatizing the situation. But that is just the point. He dramatizes it, not only because there is a real conflict, but because he wants to make it vivid.<sup>1</sup>

Paul, too, refers to this power that is able to thwart his plans and makes him do that which he has committed his will against. Romans 7:19-24 is cited by Lewis as representative of the fact that there is a warring within the nature of man which shows that regardless of the side to which man gives himself, he is the center of a crucial conflict.<sup>2</sup>

A significant meaning which the cross had for Paul and for us is that even death, "the Adversary's last weapon, is not final."<sup>3</sup> Every defeat, apparent or real, which the Adversary hands to the forces for good, is another opportunity for victory in God; but the victories are costly.

This Adversary is not a creation of God, nor is it a recalcitrant in the nature of God; but it is a metaphysical reality which stands in eternal contrast to the reality of the divine. The Creative and Discreative are both ultimates. The Adversary, the discreative, can only work when the Creator has worked. God in his creative activity

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis--PCR, pp. 301-302.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis--CAA, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 156.



prepares the ground for the work of the Adversary. This is what Lewis calls the "tragic dilemma of the divine."<sup>1</sup> It is impossible for God to act according to his creative nature without making it possible for the Adversary to act discreatively. "Complete divine quiescence means that there is no evil save as dark metaphysical passivity."<sup>2</sup>

The very ground of evil, then, is outside the nature of God and outside the will of God. It is centered in the Adversary and the basic evil is the fact that there can be no act of creation without there also being a discreative act. "If evil is even then to serve the cause of good, it will be only as creativity is willing to pay the price of subjecting it...What therefore should be creative joy is tempered with creative agony."<sup>3</sup>

It is not without significance that it is almost a universal tendency to speak of the demonic in personal terms, for it is not enough to speak of evil as a principle. However, it is wrong to speak of the Adversary in personal terms, for it is lacking in the very qualities of morality and rationality that are essential to the personal. We can know the Adversary only as we can see its effect in the work on God's creation. It is everything that God is not. "It is the purely irrational, the purely immoral, the purely malign, the purely destructive."<sup>4</sup> The Adversary

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 138

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 145.





can be most destructive at exactly the point where the divine is most productive. This is why the battle centers in man and it is why we tend to describe the demonic in semipersonal terms.

A completely bad man would be corruptibility become absolute. One can but hope and pray that this will never be, but what it visualizes is at least an approximation to the demonic. What a personal existent, bearing the Imago Dei, would be if it were to become demoralized, derationalized, depersonalized, desocialized, in a word, dehumanized--in this the demonic has perchance an analogy.<sup>1</sup>

### (3) The Arena

If there is to be both a Creator and an Adversary locked in mortal combat, there must be a field of activity. We have said that this field is God's creation, but have not adequately described the creation or the stuff out of which it is created.

#### (a) The residue

It is quite possible to suppose that God creates purely ex nihilo or from non-being, as Ferre had indicated. However, Lewis calls our attention to the creation story where, he says, it was suggested that the earth was waste and darkness, an abyss. He suggests that this is the way it was and is with God's new creations. There is an eternal "residue" out of which God creates eternally.

This residue is neither positive or negative, that is, it is neither good nor bad, creative or discreative. The residue is neutral. It is the dark waste and void,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 146.



the abyss, from which God forms all creation. In a real sense, the residue, of which Lewis speaks, is similar to Plato's Receptacle, from which creation flows.

The residue, then forms one more eternal existent. There is the eternal Creator, the eternal Adversary and the eternal residue. The residue is not, in the strictest sense, part of the arena, because the struggle between the Creator and the Adversary does not extend to the residue prior to creation. It is only as God creates from the residue that the arena is set and the battle is waged.<sup>1</sup>

#### (b) Nature

Observance of nature makes it very evident that there is a conflict going on that centers, in part, in natural life. For instance, death is an essential part of the pattern of life. There is the pattern of birth, growth, death, decomposition and new birth. This is the pattern of the whole fact of evolution.

Life marches forward on stepping stones which are memorials whose builder is death. If there is to be that march, there must be those memorials. Life springs from life through death. To that extent death is vindicated by the life it helps to make possible.<sup>2</sup>

This is in effect saying that in nature there is a necessitated evil. The necessity of death is simply an aspect of the fundamental fact of evil, that if there is

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis, "The Creative Conflict," op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis--CAA, p. 40.





to be creativity, there will also be discreativity. In nature, then we see the conflict in progress: good, necessary creativity, is in mortal conflict with evil, necessary evil.<sup>1</sup>

(c) Man

Man becomes important to the whole problem of evil for the conflict centers in him with greater intensity than any other part of God's creation. When God created man, he created another creator. Not a creator in the sense of creating out of the residue, but man is creator in the sense of making new combinations out of what God has given him, in building up what the destructive forces tear down, and in the sense that man can respond to holy love with holy love.

Man, then, is something new and something higher in God's creative order. Since he has free spirit, he rises above the rest of the process. Man's arrival is the arrival of the fittest. His survival is the survival of the fittest, but to survive he must show that he is the fittest. Mankind with its free spirit,

...had to struggle against a new kind of hostility because it represented a new kind of value. The discreative is active where the creative is most active. Where else can the creative be more active than in free spirit? Where else is more at stake? Where else is victory more desirable? Where else is defeat more devastating?<sup>2</sup>

Man is a part of the total process of creation and also apart from the process. As a part of the process

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 51.





he has to live in the world as the world is. Like all other living things within that world, he must battle for his very existence. He has to meet conditions as they emerge from moment to moment. But unlike the other creatures of the world, man's existence is more than mere creaturely existence. Man was made so that he might live in a certain way. There is the qualitative about him that is not found in the other creatures of the existence. Man has the freedom to make good conscious or to make evil conscious, often at the cost of severe struggle. As a creature, man is the consummation of a process; as a free spirit, he is more than the process. As a creature man is governed by necessity; as a free spirit he breaks the chain of necessity. This gives rise to the religious fact.

The possibility of ethical choices raises the religious question, because the ethical being looks beyond himself for a source of right choices.<sup>1</sup> Religion points to the source of life which is also the source of strength and gives man a necessary faith, a faith "that the source of life, and hence the source of creative strife, is vitally interested in the outcome of the strife, especially as it is carried on in the life of man, and that it gives itself to that cause."<sup>2</sup>

The importance of freedom is not sufficiently stressed even after we have said that freedom lifts man above his creatureliness and it gives rise to the religious

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis--GAO, p. 230, Lewis--PCL, p. 94, Lewis--CAA, pp. 43-44, 84.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis--CAA, p. 85.





fact. Freedom also gives rise to moral decisions that give meaning to the term "moral evil" and the word "sin." The Christian faith has always had a doctrine of sin even though it has not always had a doctrine of human freedom. This points to the fact that sin is basic to the nature of man. Sin is not just man's mistaken choices, though mistakes made by man's judgment are a part of the total problem of evil; sin is man's rebellion. Two possibilities are open for man: he may rebel against God or he may accept God's will as his will. Both possibilities are in God's plan<sup>1</sup>

We not only have the two choices before us, but we will inevitably choose rebellion in many instances rather than acceptance. Acceptance, even though it is acceptance of the best possible will, means that man has chosen to let God's will become determinative of all we do.<sup>2</sup> Man is basically enamoured with the idea of his own individuality and thus naturally tends to assert himself, even at the cost of rebelling against God. This is man's natural depravity, the sin of Adam, man's first sin. It is not that Adam's sin has been transmuted down through the centuries to us; but, rather, that Adam fell before the same temptations we fall before. This is God's plan.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin Lewis, Christian Truth for Christian Living (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1942), pp. 80-81, Lewis--ACM, pp. 137-138.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis--PCL, pp. 98-99.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis--CAA, pp. 55, 129-130, 222.



To say that man's natural depravity, his tendency to rebel, is part of God's plan, is not to say that God is responsible for the sin rather than man. It is to say that to accomplish what God wanted to accomplish, to put the struggle with the Adversary on a level where God was sure to win victories on increasing levels, the best possible creation for God was a free spirit capable of rebelling--one that inevitably would rebel. God has more at stake in man than he has in the rest of his creation, but his chance of victory is also greater. God made man knowing that he would rebel, and God holds man responsible for that rebellion, but God was willing to pay the price because he was sure of the victory.<sup>1</sup>

The price God had to pay and which God is still paying is the cross. Man is incapable of living up to the expectation God has for him without God's help. Man needs a pattern to follow and a strength outside himself to make it possible for him to follow the pattern. God gives man both the pattern and the power in Christ, but this was done at the cost of the cross.<sup>2</sup>

Man fulfils God's plan, then, as he becomes increasingly transformed from sinful man to "a man in Christ."

A man in Christ is a man who comes increasingly under the control of Christ as he increasingly understands him. This requires that Christ, in whom God stands finally self-revealed, shall be the creator of the man's faith in God, the object of his love, the ground

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis--GAO, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis--CAA, p. 241-242.





and inspiration of his service, the Lord of all his life, and the pattern to which he seeks to conform.<sup>1</sup>

Man, who is the center of the creative strife, is also the center of the creative goal. The goal is the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of holy love. As man works toward that goal, he does so at great personal cost; but he does not do it alone, God works in him. As man works creatively he becomes more divine and shares more in the cross. As man is more destructive, he becomes more demonic and adds to the burden of the cross. So great is the power of man's freedom.

#### (4) The Conflict Itself

Much has already been said about the nature of the conflict itself, but little has been said about how the conflict is progressing and what the outcome will be. Will there ever be a final victory? If so, who wins, the Creator or the Adversary? If not, how is the struggle conceived? Are there new heights to the struggle or is it a stale-mate on the level we see?

God and the Adversary are foes. The Adversary is everything that God is not. God may at times use the evil done by the Adversary to destroy evil, evil may be used to produce the good. But God does not create the evil nor look favorably on it. Evil is always a foe to God. His involvement in strife with evil, therefore, is inevitable, if he is to maintain his creative nature, for he must oppose

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 208.



that which would destroy his creative work.<sup>1</sup>

This strife, in which God takes part, is a cosmic struggle. The two ultimate metaphysical realities are struggling in every part of the universe in every moment of existence. In every creation, there is discreativity. The same rain that waters the crops and makes them grow, is the rain that floods the crops and destroys them. The same being, created for the purpose of further creations of holy love, not only creates more love but creates more hate. It is the very nature of the cosmos as we witness it to be not only cosmos but chaos.<sup>2</sup>

The conflict itself is evident, but the reason for the conflict is not so evident. Lewis sees the value of the conflict in these terms,

What the Creator brings to pass against the Adversary has a meaning which could never be reached without the opposition. It is something to consider. The wrath of the Adversary promotes the purposes and augments the praise of the Creator! So great a paradox does existence unfold.<sup>3</sup>

God cannot choose to create without choosing to come into conflict with the Adversary. But when God chooses to create he chooses to create in a manner that will redound to his glory rather than one that would bring doubt as to his goodness. This means that God pays the highest possible price in achieving the highest possible victory.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 134-135, 168.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 24, 132, 152-153; Lewis--CTCL, pp. 76-77.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis--CAA, p. 67.





The fact that it is a cosmic struggle, however, indicates that it is an eternal struggle. Even the highest possible victory is not a final victory, because a final victory for good is not possible, if evil is a metaphysical reality. The divine is eternal, but so is the demonic--and so is the residue.

Each of these three eternal factors is a limiting factor to the other two and thus existence is always more than any two of the eternal existents. Each has its own nature and each is eternal. The residue is constant; the divine is creative by nature; and the demonic is discreative by nature.

The creative divine creates through the instrumentality of the uncreative constant, whose function is to be the bearer of quality, of meaning, of value, of life; and the discreative demonic destroys or seeks to destroy what is created, since destructiveness is its very nature. The divine and the demonic are absolute opposites. Neither can destroy the other because each is a necessary existent. Either can effect the other only through the residual uncreated constant.<sup>1</sup>

The summary as to the nature of the conflict and the meaning of his whole position cannot be made in a more clear and concise manner than this statement which Lewis makes as more or less introductory to his presentation in The Creator and the Adversary. He wrote:

The purpose of this book, briefly expressed, is to present an evangelical interpretation of the Christian faith in terms of conflict. Wherever we look we see the opposition of good and evil. The biblical revelation, which asserts God as personally and sacrificially participating in this conflict through Jesus Christ,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 142.



carries the manifest implication that the conflict is of God's own choosing only in the sense that it is involved in his purpose. Deeper than the fact of his purpose, however, is the very nature of existence itself, which is such that creation in any sense and for any purpose would lay upon the Creator the necessity for conflict. The creative process discloses the Adversary, but the Adversary was there already, "couching at the door," awaiting his opportunity. The biblical revelation therefore not only gives the Christian religion a profound congruity with the observed creative processes, but becomes the key to the understanding of them in their relation to a Creator whose nature is holy love.<sup>1</sup>

### C: Evaluation

When Edwin Lewis arrives at the conclusion that reality can be truly understood as ultimately of two basic metaphysical realities, actually three existents in nature of the Creator, the Adversary, and the residue, he has taken a step so serious that one ought not to follow him without recognizing that seriousness.

The very fact that he has to posit the existence of the residue, demonstrates that dualism leads into greater pluralisms and thus it takes increasingly more divisions to explain all that we experience in the universe.

He has a strong argument in his favor, when he speaks of the fact that it is almost universally man's nature to speak of these existents as separate and real entities. It is hard to conceive that all that is in the universe, the good and the bad, can be explained in the nature of a single metaphysical reality.

But it is hard, too, for man's mind to think of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-10.





solid steel as being composed of billions of molecules in constant flux; or it is hard for man to think in terms of red material not actually being red but, only reflecting light waves which we interpret as being red. The fact that one way of viewing things is the easiest and most common way, does not mean that it is the right way.

This position runs the risk of giving us a God who is not adequate for our needs. If there are two opposing forces, both eternal at the front end at least, how can we be sure that one will not defeat the other--and perhaps it will be the wrong one. If this creation is a divine adventure, then the fact that God began it means that he thought he was adequate; but it does not assure us that he was sure that he was adequate.

However, beyond the fact that this position speaks of metaphysical reality in terms that are common to us all, there are other values which commend the total view to us. God becomes very real and very personal at the level where we need him most, the level of suffering. God does not take on the form of suffering, God suffers. Man is not just being taught that it would be best for him to quit rebelling, although evil does teach him that; man begins to understand his position as not only part of the problem but also part of the solution.

The view has its chief attraction for this writer in that it is the only one of the three views that seems



to explain adequately how it is that love can breed hate,  
that good intentions can bring evil results, and that where  
the highest good is, there is also the greatest evil.





## CHAPTER V

### COMPARING THE VIEWS

The chapter headings over the three chapters dealing specifically with the thought of the men whose works are under study in this paper, have been designed to give as succinct a description of the point of emphasis for the man as it is possible to give. This does not mean that the thought can be abbreviated to the point that a phrase explains all or that the answer each man affirms can be attributed to a special interest in a part of the total problem. Each man has a total world view of which the problem of evil is only one, though a major problem. Each man has to present his view in such a manner that it will bring out the part of the problem that the others seem to neglect. Thus when Brightman's view is labeled the "Evil of Evil," it points up the fact that a basic point Brightman stresses is that even though God ultimately turns every evil to his purpose, the fact remains that at the time of its occurrence it was an evil.

Ferre, on the other hand, feels that such a position reflects the hedonistic principle that there ought to be no pain. He stresses the fact that we do receive



valuable insight from our painful experiences, that pain means growth. The idea that we are "Learning from Evil" is that God has a good purpose for what we call evil and since good comes from his use of it, it cannot really be evil. God does not use evil means to produce good.

The third view, expressed in the title "Good Versus Evil," gives evidence that Lewis does not feel that either Brightman or Ferre understands the very basic nature of evil. Brightman understands in part, when he sees it as a limiting factor within the nature of God. This distorts the nature of God to preserve a metaphysical monism. That monism was a basic assumption for Brightman and not a fact demonstrated by experience. The fact is that evil is a limiting factor; but it is a factor completely outside the nature of God. God is limited from without by a factor that is "given" by the nature of existence but not "given" in God's nature.

These differences are basic enough to the positions of the three men, that they need to be pointed up before consideration has been given to the points of agreement. It is our plan, now, to give the points at which the three views agree, their points of difference and then an evaluation of the relative merits of each of the views.

#### A. Agreement

There is much of common ground in the three views; the following is a listing which indicates some of the





vital areas at which there is general agreement:<sup>1</sup>

(1) There is general agreement that God is a person. The three men disagree as to how adequately this term describes God, but none would deny that the term is applicable.

Brightman describes God as supremely personal spirit or supreme person, making personality the most adequate means of description. Ferré holds that to call God a person is to describe the whole God in terms of only one aspect of his nature. God is person, in Ferré's thought, but there is more than a mere qualitative difference between the personality of God and the personality of man. God is person and spirit in a being-becoming relationship that is wholly other than human personality, God is Agape.

At this point, Lewis appears to be somewhere in the middle of the other two positions. He, too, sees God as person and as the wholly other. His emphasis on man as the imago Dei emphasizes the fact that man is like God; but unlike God because he is only an image. The fact that there is both creativity and discreativity in man makes him very different in more than a qualitative sense from God who is the Creator.

(2) All three men agree that ideals are objective. "Eternal values," as they have been called, are essential

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<sup>1</sup>This list is based on a similar listing found in Brightman--FOR, pp. 301-303. However, Brightman's list appeared before the writing of Ferré and Lewis and has been used only as an outline to be expanded for use in this paper.



to the character of God, whether he is absolute or finite."<sup>1</sup> Both Ferré and Lewis would concur with this statement, even if there might be some discussion about which are the eternal values.

(3) All three agree that experience is basic to human knowledge. Brightman gives a place for religious experience as real experience, but revelation is not very basic to his position. Ferré and Lewis depend on God's revelation of himself for the essential data for making a final judgment as to the real nature of God, the nature that neither science nor philosophy can reveal. It is the feeling of the author of this thesis, however, that though both men make the cross the central act in God's revelatory work, only Lewis really ties the cross into God's total plan for revelation. Lewis makes the cross an integral part of the revelation that runs the entire length of God's Word in the Bible; while Ferré introduces factors that do not seem to come either from the revelation in the Bible, or from the revelation of the Spirit through the work of the church.

(4) All agree that God is worthy of worship. Yet each man would feel that the concept of God described in the other views, lacks essential elements necessary if God is truly worthy of our worship. The very fact that they disagree about what is necessary in the nature of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.301.





God to make him worthy of worship, is evidence that they all believe that God must be worthy of worship or he is not God.

(5) They all agree that God is responsive to man. Each has a view of God that includes God's nature as redeemer, one who shares in man's suffering and takes part of the burden on himself. The implications are different, however. For Brightman, this factor means that God's nature has limitations in it, making suffering necessary for God to suffer in man and in response to man. For Ferré, this element of suffering and personal response is evidence of how perfect the glory of God really is. For Lewis, the suffering and response to suffering is part of the evidence that God is personally engaged in conflict with a dysteleological metaphysical reality outside his own nature.

Regardless which view is taken the men agree that this suffering element means that God is not only conscious of himself but also of everything in the world. God knows and cares about our situation.

(6) All agree that God is in some way in control of the universe. For Ferré, the control is a more absolute control in nature and ultimate control of all men; for Brightman, it is control on increasingly higher levels; and for Lewis, God is winning increasingly more significant struggles with the Adversary.

(7) Brightman assures us that both absolutists and



finitists agree that God is in some way limited, even if only by his own self-limitations. Lewis would generally agree with that; but Ferre does not like the term "self-limitation." He feels it is better to say that God is the way he is because it is the best way to accomplish what he wants to accomplish, but it is conceivable that he could be different if he wanted.

(8) All agree that in some sense immortality is part of the answer to the problem of evil. The ultimate victory or even the decisive victory of good over evil is not achieved in this life. None of the three are attempting in this manner to postpone the conflict; but each is pointing up the fact that God is at work in the overcoming of evil and certainly would not cease his efforts as long as there was any evil anywhere.

#### B. Differences

The basic difference of the three is, as already has been indicated, at the point of the ultimate nature of God. Neither Brightman nor Lewis can be satisfied with a God whose nature is as Ferre describes it; both would object that it does not adequately account for the fact that there is real evil in the universe. For Ferre, when the problem of moral evil has been explained, the whole basis for the problem of evil is also explained. For him, the real evil is moral evil. Natural evil is no real problem because it can be understood to be part of the





process by which man learns not to seek his own individuality, trusting only in himself, but to seek, rather, to commit his will to God's will.

Neither Brightman nor Lewis would believe this to be true, because each views the real problem to lie in evil factors beyond man's control. Moral evil as evil is explicable in terms of God's purpose and even some natural evil, for we learn by trial and error; but the explanation of why there is so much evil and why it is present in such an irrational nature, implies that the evil was unplanned, though God plans means of defeating it.

Both of these men, then, would object to the absoluteness of Ferré's God, because he is too remote from the real field of evil--so remote that he belittles the importance of the evil.

However, the way Brightman proposes to answer the problem does not meet the approval of either Lewis or Ferré. Ferré could, perhaps, understand Brightman's desire to keep continuity as strict as possible, but he would certainly rebel at limiting God to do it. Lewis, on the other hand, could understand Brightman's feeling that it is necessary to limit God, but he would feel that Brightman did not understand the true relation of that limitation because he did not give adequate room for God's revelation of himself. Both Ferré and Lewis would feel the placing of an irrational aspect within the very nature of God is a mistake



because it detracts from God's glory.

The place at which Lewis stands apart from both Brightman and Ferré is at the point where he accepts an ultimate dualism in metaphysics. They would feel that this splitting of the cosmos in two makes it a chaos, or tends to do so. There is no security, no assurance that God is adequate. It introduces elements into the nature of things that really are not needed to explain the universe as it is.

These are basic differences, unreconcilable differences. It calls for the choosing of a position and holding that one against the others. This can only be done by looking at the relative merits of each and then accepting one as more nearly approximating the real truth.

This final choice cannot be made purely on the basis of rationality or on the basis of faith for reason without faith is dead and faith without reason is credulity. The final choice must be made on the basis of which position merits our reasonable faith.

### C. The Relative Merits

#### (1) Brightman's Position

Perhaps the most important positive factor in Brightman's position is its reasonableness. His endeavor to take all the facts of experience into account, thus forming a philosophical position in which each factor is coherent with all other factors, is commendable. Couple





this with his clear recognition that evil is real evil, and he gives us a very clear understanding of the situation, as we face it and as God faces it.

The problem is, however, that it is an "understanding" of the problem. There is little room for incorporating those things that we cannot know, those things that God reveals to us.

The position gives us security in the knowledge of the future, belief that God will work things out in time; but not very much assurance that there is a line of communication between God and man. This view might give security in the "knowledge of God" but it does not give the faith in God that comes from a personal experience of his presence.

## (2) Ferre's Position

What Brightman lacks in the warmth of his position, Ferre makes up for in his by holding out to man the possibility of a future perfect relationship with God in a family fellowship. Ferre had the advantage, we may say, of testing his out in his own personal relationships in perhaps a more intense fashion than did either Brightman or Lewis, though neither of them escaped suffering and pain. However, there is that about Ferre's way of thinking that does not really seem to correspond to reality. There is something in the way that he ignores the real evil of evil, that makes one feel that though there is to be this close



relationship to God, the relationship with God is a strange one. God is Agape Love and thus suffers with us and, yet, God's sympathy for us is not because we suffer as much as because we fail to learn from our suffering. This view also deprives us of our freedom in any real sense of the word. We have the freedom to rebel for a time but God knows that ultimately he can win every one of us to his fellowship--and he will win us even if he has to goad us to do it.

### (3) Lewis' Position

Lewis, like Brightman, understands the fact that evil is real evil; but unlike Brightman he is willing to divide the metaphysical realm to explain it. The advantage of the position, over that of Brightman's is that it brings the problem into a relationship we can understand. We talk in dualistic terms. It also gives a clear explanation of how the intensity of evil can increase.

The dangers are greater, however, because God embarks on an adventure which he feels he is capable of completing, but which he might not complete. The position may be introducing more factors than are absolutely necessary for the explanation of reality. But Lewis introduces these factors because he feels they are necessary to explain reality and it seems to this author that he is right, that monism does not adequately explain the cunning nature of so much of evil.





#### D. Conclusion

There are enough strengths and weaknesses to each position, that one is taking grave risk when making a choice among them. We are dealing with a question where we cannot know, our final decision will be a decision of faith built on a superstructure of the best that we can know.

This writer admits that he is hesitant to make that decision at this stage of his thinking. His previous training, is such that it is his most natural tendency to accept the position of Brightman as being the one most nearly true. However, after the study made here, there seems to be more that corresponds to our real situation in the position set forth by Edwin Lewis.

It does not seem likely that this is the best possible creation, that an absolute God could make, as Ferre believes. To say that the ultimate ground of evil is in the nature of God, gives God the aspect of having a dual or schizophrenic nature; therefore, there is that about Brightman's position that is inadequate.

To affirm a dualism, supposedly, places an element of chance in the universe; but not to any greater degree than with Brightman. If God has been able to handle the Adversary so far, it is likely that he will be able to do so eternally. And what if there is an element of chance? That may actually be the way the universe is made. Perhaps



in each new world that God creates, there is the possibility that the Adversary will win control. Perhaps that is the chance God is taking with free spirit in this world. Perhaps that is why man means so much that God suffers for him.

These are purely "perhaps" situations. It is indicated that none of these positions are sure enough that we can know they are right. However, in the next chapter, we shall see that a study such as we have just made is worth the undertaking whether or not we were able to uncover the last word on the problem of evil.





## CHAPTER VI

### THE PROBLEM OF GOOD

As has been indicated, this author does not believe that the answer given by any one of the three men under study was convincing enough to warrant the unequivocal acceptance of it. This does not mean, however, that the study was fruitless. There is much to make us believe that most of our basic questions have been answered and that, though we have not fully answered the problem of evil, we answered a more significant problem, the problem of good.

In the introductory chapter we asked five questions and said that these questions were basic to the total study. The questions are: (1) Does each man believe that evil is a problem? (2) If the problem of evil is considered to be a real question, how is it approached by each man? (3) If there is evil how does it relate to God? (4) Is God consistent in his activity, especially his activity as a loving creator? (5) What does all this have to do with man?

In answer to the first question, it has become apparent by now that each of these men considers the problem of evil to be a real problem, a problem that



challenges the very existence of God at the point of the dilemma between his goodness and his power. Not one of the men would be satisfied with a philosophical or theological view that tried to explain evil by saying that evil is not a real problem. However, they disagree at the point of describing what the real problem of evil is.

For Ferre, the real problem of evil is the problem of moral evil. Natural evil can be understood, primarily, as God's way of giving man the lessons he needs if he is to understand fully the opportunity for fellowship that is open to him. When man suffers, he becomes more sympathetic toward his fellow man and he learns how insufficient he is in himself--he learns his dependence on God and his fellow human beings. The reason there is so much evil, both natural and moral, is because man has so much yet to learn and he has been so unwilling to learn it. Hence the whole problem centers in man's freely chosen rebellion.

For Brightman, the problem of evil is primarily the problem of natural evil. Moral evil can be understood as a part of God's plan to create free persons; but moral evil does not explain why there is so much waste in nature, why progress comes at such a cost. He does not deny that mankind can learn through suffering; but he sees evil in the suffering itself. The problem becomes the problem of surd evil in nature. His basic question is the question,





"Why is there so much evil for which there seems to be no reason to explain adequately its presence?"

Lewis, in defining the problem of evil, follows Brightman most of the way. Yet there is also a difference. Lewis admits that there is much evil that seems to be working toward no good purpose; but he goes beyond this to say that the evil even seems to have a cunning nature as though there were something consciously seeking to destroy values and wreck purpose.

Not only do these men differ in the way they define the basic nature of the problem, but they differ in their basic approach to the problem, as we have seen.

Brightman uses the inductive method almost exclusively, in his entire philosophical approach. He begins with experience, the good and bad experiences of life, and tries to tie all experience into a coherent whole. The test of each experience, as to whether it gives a valid interpretation of life, is whether or not it coheres with other experiences in the same field or experiences in other fields of activity. Thus science, philosophy and theology are welded into a total life view. This total view is a philosophical view, rather than a theological view, and at this point Brightman is very different from the other two.

Ferre, like Brightman, uses induction; but the induction quickly moves to the conclusion that God is



the Most High and the Most Real. From this point, he looks at the rest of life. Thus the problem of evil is answered by deducing the answer from the nature of God. His method is: "If God is the Most High and the Most Real, then evil must..."

Lewis stands more strictly in the tradition of those who put their first trust in revelation for the source of Christian truth from first to last. The primary source of revelation is the word of God as disclosed in the Bible. However, revelation must be tested by relating it to experience. His approach, then, is to ask what the Bible has to say about the nature of evil, and then to check it with experience to see whether or not it really works out the way the Bible discloses.

Having defined the problem differently and approached it differently, it is almost inevitable that the three men would arrive at different answers as to how evil relates to God. We have discussed this before, but ought to summarize it once more as indication that each proceeds consistently within the framework of his thought.

For Brightman, evil relates to God as a part of his "Given" nature. God does not will evil, ideally, but he wills the conditions in which evil is at work. Evil is the recalcitrant, the drag within God's nature that challenges him in his creative efforts.

For Ferre, evil relates to God as a part of his





plan. Not that God foreknows every evil that will happen; but that God has planned that there will be those elements of pain and conflict in nature that will help to mould and develop man's character.

Lewis sees evil as a challenge to God at the level of ultimate reality. God, the Creator, has a challenge in the form of an evil, destructive being which is as eternal as God. In this view, God has to deal with man's freedom to choose evil; but he has to deal with evil on a deeper level. The Adversary is of such a perverse nature, that he often thwarts man's best intentions. God is limited in his nature because he cannot create good without creating a field in which the activity of the Adversary will be made manifest.

The breaches that have been widening as these men search further and further into the nature of evil, suddenly begin to mend as the men approach the meaning of the problem for man. They agree on the fact that God is consistent in his activity as loving creator. Each man believes that God is abounding in steadfast love.

They affirm our faith that God created the heavens and the earth and he saw that they were good. Ferré is much more emphatic at this point than are the other two. For Ferré the world is the very best possible for the plan which God had in mind. There is no more evil in the world than what God thought was best for our own good. In Ferré's



thought there can be no doubt about God's adequacy, because he knows the end result in general and knows that ultimately evil, even man's evil, will cease.

There is assurance, at this point, in the thought of the other men, too. They assure us that God wills the best possible for us. They assure us, too, that this is the best possible world God could make for the plan that he had in mind. They assure us that God will eradicate the evil, or bring good out of it far beyond our expectations; but they warn us that there will always be challenge for God and for man. Evil will never be eradicated, although it will always be sublimated.

In the thinking of all, there is no room for a belief that any evil will be final. All things will work together for good, every person may be assured that God will not rest in any situation, until good has been brought out of the evil in that situation.

Redemption becomes a vital concept whenever any of these views is put into religious categories. Brightman is a philosopher and is not primarily concerned with the concept of redemption, so the view is not as explicit in his thinking; but it is there as it is in the thinking of the others.

Man suffers, but God suffers, too, and God suffers in order that man might be freed from the bondage of sin. The danger of emphasizing natural evil, and God's role in





conquering it, is that we will forget that God is at work redeeming man from the evil of his own making.

Thus God and man are in a co-operative venture that has a purpose, that is going somewhere toward a great objective. Man suffers in nature and as a result of his own sin. God suffers with man both in nature and in the moral realm. This places a new responsibility on man and gives him a new privilege.

In the natural world, God and man working together are achieving victories that verge on the miraculous. The stamping out of infectious diseases, the prediction of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, and the unlocking of the secret power of the atom, all show the potential that lies in man's co-operating in the plan of things in the natural world. The phenomenal growth of the peace movement, the great strides in the forward movement of social justice, and the achievements of the church leaders in the ecumenical movement show what can be achieved when this co-operation is projected into the moral realm.

Of course, all of these goods can receive reversal and most of the achievements could conceivably be used for evil purposes (there will always be the very necessary struggle to keep them from being used for evil means); but there is reason to believe that any setback will be a temporary setback for God. God has made his creation good and he keeps it good through the power of redemption. in



his son Jesus Christ.

Brightman does not deal very thoroughly with the power of redemption in the cross because it is not basically a philosophical matter; but as a Christian, he presupposes what he does not discuss as a philosopher. However, redemption through the cross and in the person of Christ is very basic to the theological views of both Ferre and Lewis. This is the point at which God's loving concern for man becomes most truly expressed. It is not fixed at one point in history; but, rather, Christ continues to suffer with men when great tribulation is bravely carried in his name.

Christ gives us victory over pain, not by freeing us from it, but by giving us the courage to face it. He gives us victory over the pangs of doubt by giving us assurance in the future. He gives us victory over loneliness by demonstrating his love for us. He overcomes our most deep-seated fear, the fear of death, by the assurance that death is only a beginning, not an end. It is at this point that the three views cohere, giving one great affirmation of Christian hope and faith.

The three men agree that man does not have to fear the end of this life, for death does not mean either the end of a man or the final destruction of any values. This God who is able to bring man into being is able to sustain his creation through eternity. This means that beyond





this life there is another life, or there are other lives, in which opportunity is given to win victories over evil that temporarily set us back in this life, to sustain values experienced in this life, and to create new values not yet even dreamed of in our highest fancies.

This is what is meant by the statement that we found the answer to the problem of good. We found that God is good, that his work is good, and that in him and through him greater good is ever being achieved.

We may arrive at many answers as to the nature of evil; we may be undecided as to what the fact of evil has to say about the reality of God; but there is no question as to what the real answer to the problem of good is: When we are confronted with good, when we see value in any form, we know it is good and valuable because it is the creation of a good God.

In the final analysis, the problem of evil remains a question mark; but the answer to the problem of good is God.



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